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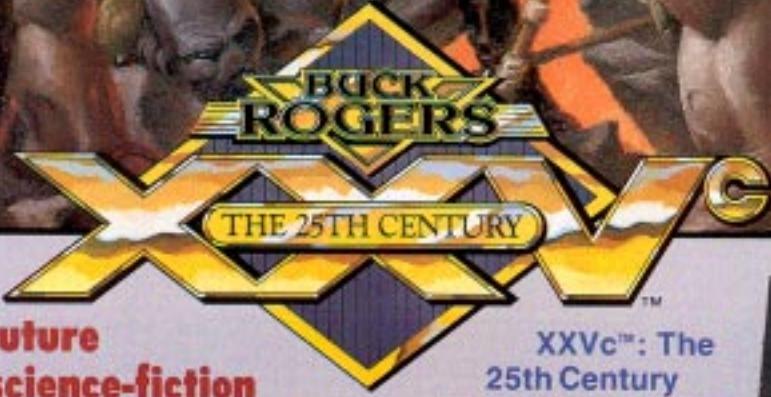
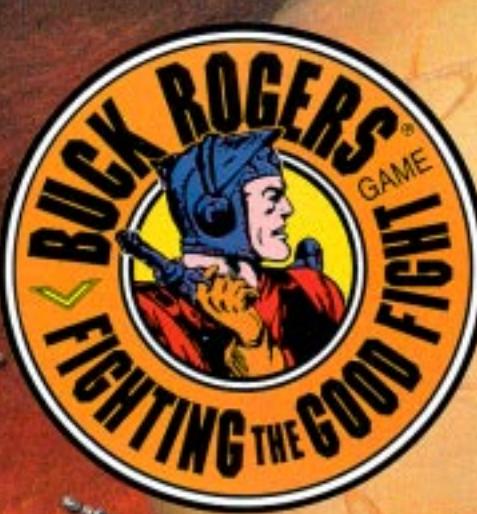
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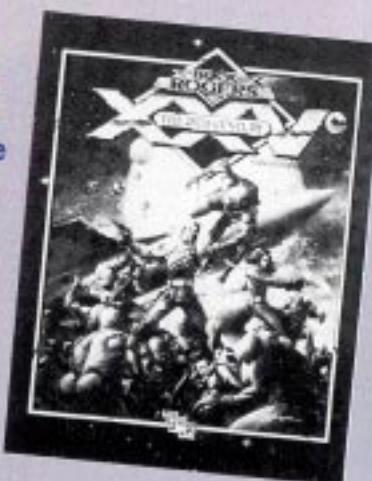
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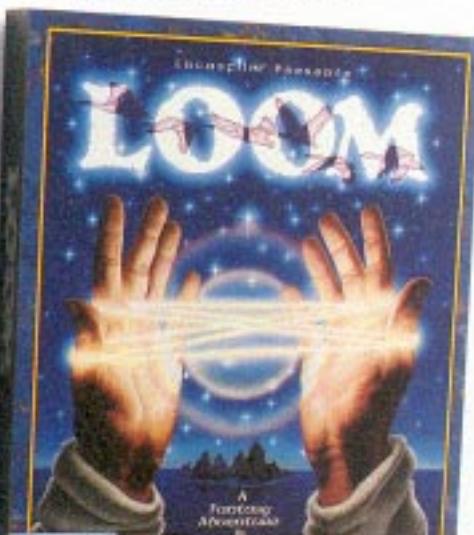
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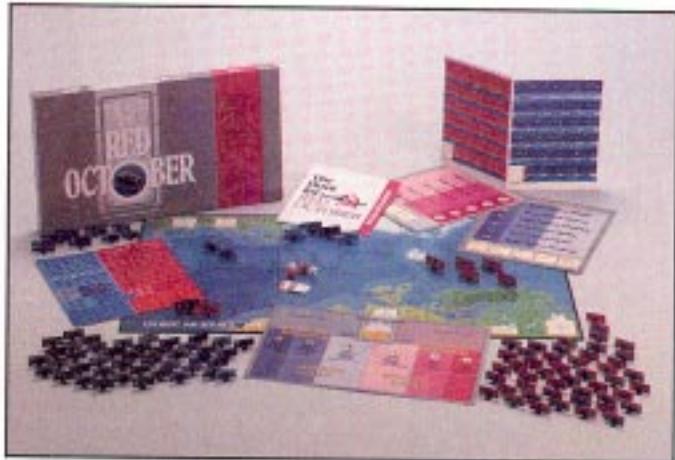
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# Dragon

MAGAZINE

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## COVER

It was just another crystal sphere until the half-elfen captain saw the double planet. When he ordered his privateer to move in and investigate, another surprise appeared—the *Spelljammer* itself was in orbit! What's a clever captain to do next? Robin Wood presents this stunning scene, "The Privateer," for our July cover. For information on prints, write to: Robin Wood, 15981 Woodland Drive, Dearborn MI 48120, U.S.A.

# LETTERS

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LD, United Kingdom.

## Live & in color!

Dear Dragon:

I've recently read a G.M. magazine article about live role-playing in England. I was wondering if you know about any LRPGs in the U.S., preferably near western Pennsylvania.

Steven T. Voigt  
Pittsburg PA

*Funny that you should write to us about LPRGs just now. In this issue, we have "Down With the Titanic!" by Lawrence Schick, which gives many of the details on how LRPGs are run. Details on contacting the Society for Interactive Literature are given at the end of that article. Another writer has sent us a pamphlet on NERO, the New England Roleplaying Organization; for information on this group, write to: NERO, c/o the Gamemaster, 212A Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington MA 02174, U.S.A. Convention listings and notes in your local hobby shops might give leads to other LRPG groups.*

## Recycle it?

Dear Dragon:

I have not been involved in environmental issues until recently, when the Earth Day festivities began. I began to consider the implications of the discussions during the week of Earth Day, and I began recycling all of my cans, bottles, and newspapers.

Then one day soon afterward, my gaming group got together for our weekly meeting. After the adventure was completed, I noticed that we had used 17 sheets of paper! That equates to at least 900 sheets of paper every year. I assume that this is the average for most four- or five-person groups. Considering the hundreds of thousands of gamers worldwide, this creates cause for some concern.

If all the gamers reading this magazine began recycling the paper used in their campaigns and also began using recycled paper, we could put a large dent in the amount of paper being used every year. I also wonder if DRAGON Magazine would consider using recycled paper in the printing process.

I am not asking gamers to make any big changes, just a few small ones that can make a big difference.

David S. Morgan  
Beatrice AZ

*TSR did not do a lot of recycling (as far as I know) until the last couple of years, when a Girl Scout troop leader set up containers in the building for aluminum cans. This year, a number of other recycling projects are being discussed, among them being ways to recycle the tremendous amount of paper that we go through. As I write this, motion-detecting light switches are being installed in some offices and restrooms, which should save a lot of money on electric bills (of course, if you lock yourself in a restroom stall for a long time... click. "Hey!").*

*Game referees and players can always bring used paper (with one blank side) from their schools or workplaces to game meetings, for use as character notepads, message sheets, hastily designed diagrams of monster-filled dungeon rooms into which your group has just been teleported, etc. I bring home large quantities of used paper for my son to draw on and turn into airplanes. If you're going to throw paper out, it might as well be thoroughly used!*

*And as for printing DRAGON Magazine on recycled paper, we don't because it simply isn't available at the moment. But we'll keep it in mind.*

## A few concerns

Dear Dragon:

I have a few concerns that I hope you can help me with:

1. What is the oldest undiscovered mistake in the history of DRAGON Magazine? Kim Mohan mentioned something about this in issue #102 (page 3) but refused to say anything else about it. If you cannot tell me what it is, could you at least give the readership a general hint if, in fact, this mistake is still undiscovered?

2. Are there any plans for producing SSI computer games that are based on a TSR game besides the AD&D® game? For example, I think that a GAMMA WORLD® computer game would be very interesting.

3. How about a SPELLJAMMER™ computer game from SSI?

4. Are there any foreseeable plans for a mass compilation (perhaps a hardcover book) of all of the variant classes and races published in DRAGON Magazine?

5. Did Waldorf or Tharizdun destroy Greyhawk? If so, how does Mika continue to adventure in the so-called destroyed lands? Or should I just disband all cohesion as I usually do?

6. Is there any such thing as a lawful-neutral dwarven paladin? I seem to recall something in a previous issue about just such a character. If so, what are the rules for one?

Zach Howard  
Crownsville MD

*1. We don't know the oldest undiscovered mistake in the history of the magazine because it is still undiscovered (nyuk, nyuk).*

*Continued on page 7*

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# EDITORIAL

## Morals: Modern vs. Medieval

Craig H. Barrett's "Forum" letter in the June issue (#158) brought up several good points regarding alignment in the AD&D® game. Briefly, he said that he'd like to see practical examples of alignments in a typical AD&D scenario. How differently would a lawful-good being act from a chaotic-good creature in a given situation? And more important, why would he act differently? Craig also states that all players and DMs bring a lot of modern moral and ethical "baggage" with them whenever they play, and he reminds us that this might be incongruous in a game that is loosely based on the society of medieval Europe.

He went on to point out that what we find morally permissible today and what the people in medieval Europe thought was acceptable are, in many ways, vastly different. Slavery, religious inquisitions, the Crusades, and witch hunts didn't happen by accident; they all were, at one time or another, supported by various governments and churches. Barrett's central question was, do we adopt these historical values into the modern game's systems, and the alignments specifically?

Although the concept might make an interesting experimental campaign, for the game as a whole I must answer no. It's obvious to me that, when reading through the alignment descriptions in both the AD&D 1st and 2nd Edition games, the alignments are described from a *modern* moral and ethical standpoint. This is a modern game after all, designed by modern people—with all their attendant "baggage."

Many of the basic freedoms we take for granted now (freedom of speech, and even the right to quit our jobs if we choose), were unthinkable in medieval times. It's hard for many of us to put ourselves in the place of the medieval serf who could not quit the tract of land that he farmed for his feudal lord.

Also, applying artificial concepts like the game's alignments to real life just doesn't work (I tried to do just that in an early draft of this editorial). Perhaps the main reason why doing that is all but impossible is because so many people have differing opinions on the issues of today. A prime example is the group of people that feel that AD&D, and RPGs in general, are evil. I don't agree with them, but they are entitled to their opinions.

Even with nine alignments, the AD&D game is basically still a game of black and



white. Good is always good, and evil is always evil. Reality has no such absolutes. Reality is all the varying shades of gray, which makes sorting out the good from the bad very difficult at times. I believe that the AD&D game's relative simplicity is one of its main attractions. You *know* that big, red, fire-breathing lizard is evil, and it's up to you to stop him. That certainty isn't very common in real life.

Craig also took examples of rulers from history (King Richard the Lionhearted, King Louis XI of France, and others) and asked if these men, who are now regarded as "good" leaders, would be lawful good within the game. He didn't think so, and I agree with him. All alignments simulate certain ideals in a form compatible for use in the game, but they're not applicable to real life.

Assigning alignments to real people is terribly difficult, but it is possible to apply many of the game's alignments to *fictional* characters. Using media sources, here's how I see the nine alignments:

Lawful good is epitomized by almost all of John Wayne's early films, especially those in the World War II genre. Also, *Three Hearts and Three Lions*, a fantasy novel by Poul Anderson, has for its hero Holger Carlsen, a man who is not only lawful good but also is the perfect example of a paladin.

I agree with Craig that neutral good is the "best" good. Unconcerned with law or chaos, neutral-good beings are only interested in goodness (e.g., the ends, not the means). Numerous TV heroes, especially

on police/crime shows, qualify as neutral good. They're willing to bend a law or two in order to get the bad guy.

Chaotic good is exemplified by many of Errol Flynn's movie roles. His *Robin Hood* is the ultimate chaotic-good hero. Burt Lancaster's early films also have a definite chaotic-good theme, especially *The Flame and the Arrow* and *The Crimson Pirate*.

Examples of lawful evil range from Sir Guy of Gisbourne and the Sheriff of Nottingham to the TV and movie versions of organized-crime syndicates of today. For comics' readers, both Lex Luthor and the Kingpin of Crime are lawful evil.

As neutral good is the best of the best, so neutral evil is the worst of the worst. A neutral-evil character is out for only himself. His methods of getting ahead don't matter, as long as he gets there. He cares for nothing and no one other than himself. Many TV villains qualify, eliminating any obstacles to their advancement as they arise.

Chaotic evil is the alignment of the terrible horrors that kept us up all those nights when we were younger. From giant movie monsters bent on the destruction of Japan to the demons of the AD&D 1st Edition game (they are the best examples), they destroy simply because they feel like it.

Lawful neutral is the domain of many of the media's satirical ideas of government. Huge, self-perpetuating bureaucracies filled with self-important pencil-pushers are wonderful examples of this alignment. To lawful-neutral beings, rules exist for their own sake.

Chaotic neutral can be demonstrated by

one particular fictional character that is not normally equated with gaming: Daffy Duck. In some of his films, Daffy is the hero; in others he plays the villain to Bugs Bunny's good guy. And in *all* of his films he is completely unrestrained; he lets his emotions and temper get the best of him, and he's never too concerned over the consequences of his actions. Your chaotic-neutral character need not act like Daffy (your DM wouldn't appreciate your cackling and bouncing off the walls, I'm sure), but keep him in mind when you get stuck in an alignment dilemma.

To sum up, you can't apply alignments to real life. The AD&D system is far too simplistic to adequately represent the intricacies of modern (and medieval) societies. There are far too many differing views on who and what is "good" or "bad" to make any absolute decisions about real life. Talk to your DM about how he sees the various alignments, work out some broad outlines, and don't let reality mess up your enjoyment of the game.

#### 1990 GEN CON® Game Fair errata:

The insert in issue #156 incorrectly reported that the Gamemasters Guild of Waukegan was one of the organizers for the miniatures and board gaming events at this year's convention. The point of contact for this gaming area is Glenn Johnson, who may be reached by phone at: (708) 356-5069.

*Dale A. Donover*

## Letters

Continued from page 5

2. Mention was made of a BUCK ROGERS™ computer game in "Buck is Back," in issue #157. The GAMMA WORLD game has been discontinued and we have stopped running articles on it in this magazine, but just between us, I agree that such a computer game would be very entertaining. POLYHEDRON™ Newszine will cover the GAMMA WORLD game.

3. Again, this is a neat idea, but we will have to wait and see what comes up.

4. The chances are about nil for any hard-bound compilation of DRAGON Magazine material. However, we are still taking votes for material for a future "Best of" anthology (as per the reply to a letter in issue #158). Write down the articles and material you would most like to see in such an anthology, and send your votes to: DRAGON Magazine Anthology, PO. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.

5. Waldorf claimed to have destroyed the lands of Greyhawk (see DRAGON issue #137, "Letters"), but this was fixed later on by an assortment of characters (see issue #149, "Letters"). Tharizdun was himself destroyed or imprisoned long before he or his followers could destroy the world of Greyhawk (see WG4 The Forgotten Temple of Tharizdun, now out of

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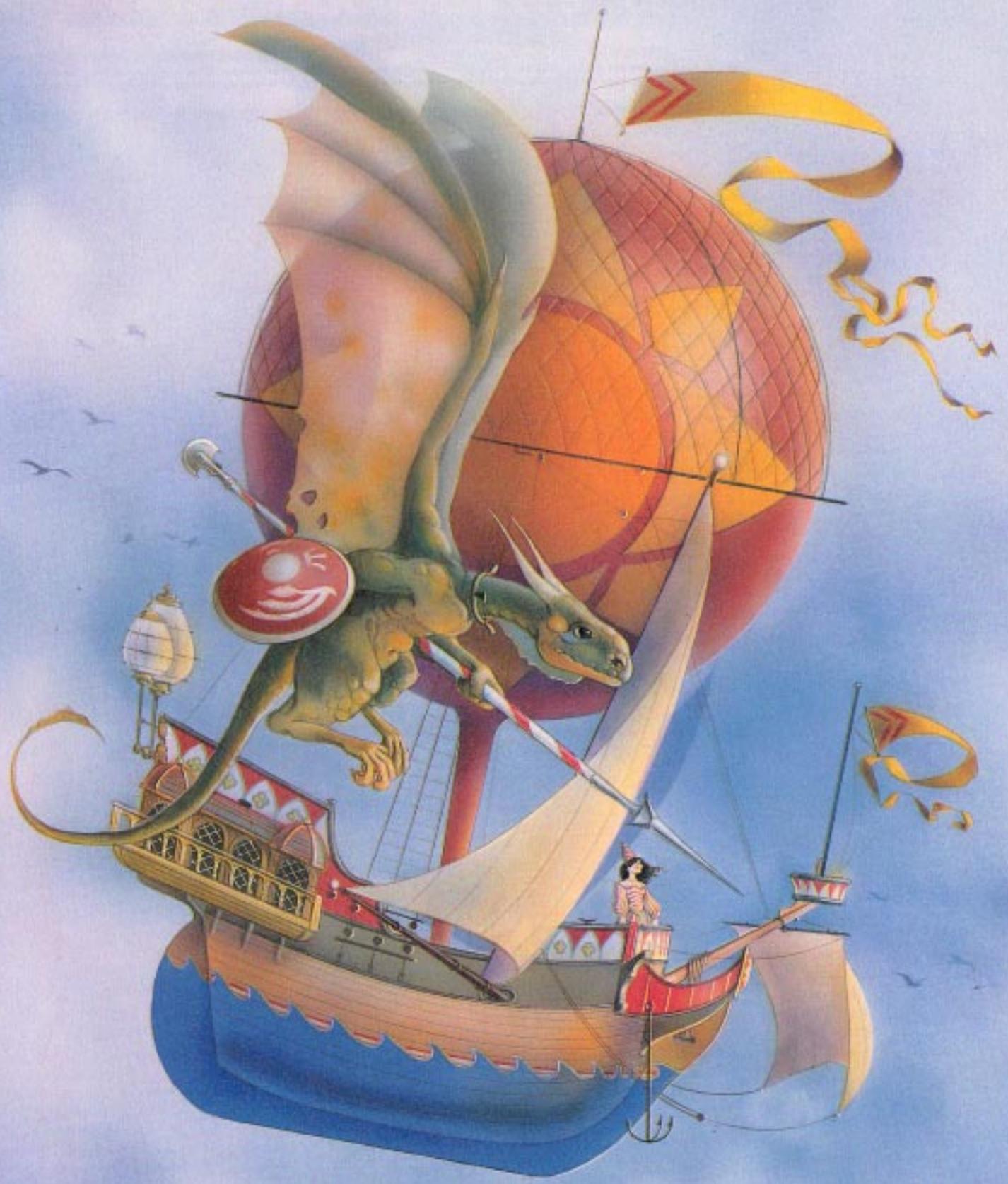
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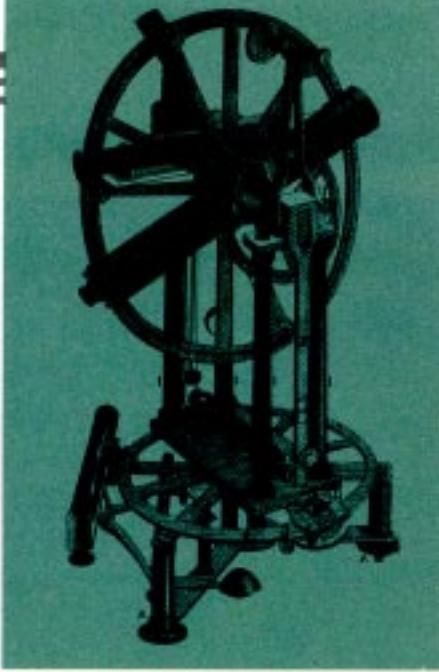
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**Beyond the sky itself**



"Come, then, if ye are so bold. See what the deeps of wildspace have to offer," Elminster said, and he smiled at me, almost sadly. "But mind: The Realms, now—they're home, an' ye know enough to recognize trouble when it raises blade or hand to smite ye. Ye will have no such comfort in space. Some places even the gods avoid!"

He gestured toward the Helm—dark, silent, and menacing. It waited patiently. "Sit," he said simply, "and take thy vessel to the stars. Only remember this: When ye sail, there's always one extra crew member at thy elbow."

He paused. Silence stretched. I sighed and asked, as expected, "And who might that be?"

He smiled again. "Why, Death, of course."



Artwork by Gerald Brom

# Rough Times on Refuge

Adventures in  
the SPELLJAMMER™ campaign setting

by Ed Greenwood

Arcane space, the endless stellar campaign setting introduced to AD&D® game players in the SPELLJAMMER™ boxed set, has unexplored corners aplenty—so many, in fact, that given the violent and dangerous state of affairs that governs much of known wildspace, any adventurers who tried such wholesale exploration would undoubtedly spend their lives in such an effort—both cheaply and soon!

Many hidden delights and dangers of arcane space will no doubt come to light in the years to come. Here is one known to many who venture into the unknown, a destination that serves beleaguered spacefarers as a way-base. Here, aid and supplies can be had, pleasures await, and

intrigue and menace also lurk. Here is the legendary spacehaven of Refuge.

Refuge is the name of both a moon and the base thereon, found in a small crystal sphere near Realmspace. Established and controlled by the Arcane, it is the largest off-world base known to spacefaring humans where the Arcane build, repair, and modify ships (for the usual high prices). Safer and far more tightly controlled than the famous Rock of Bral, Refuge is used by many prudent and good-aligned adventurers in space as a "vacation destination."

Refuge's large sun has only one planet, its single moon Refuge, and a small outer planetoid.

## Welcome

The outermost planetoid is known as Welcome to spacers; sighting it assures them that they're in the right sphere for Refuge. Those who've visited before also know that a strong defensive navy waits on Welcome (which has hidden, inner-cavern repair docks of its own), ready for trouble. These spelljammer craft, of all known designs (scorpion and turtle ships are well represented, but the Arcane play no favorites among races and designs of spacecraft) are crewed by humans and halflings loyal to the Arcane of Refuge.

At least 50 ships are based on and in Welcome, many docked in covered craters or tunnels. They serve to escort or tow crippled ships into Refuge, to quarantine suspected "plague ships" (carriers of disease) or "bomb ships" (sent regularly by the neogi and the eye tyrants, who would like to seize Refuge), and to break up any running battles that come into the sphere from the flow outside.

A dozen or so sarphardin are always to be found around Welcome, enjoying the show. Welcome has its own radiance, provided by the Glomoss Gardens tended on its surface. The properties of this beneficial natural growth and the abilities of the sarphardin are described in the SJR1 *Lost Ships* accessory.

## Below

The uninhabited world that Refuge orbits provides visiting ships with free fresh water and air, but the Arcane recommend that visitors not land there to explore or attempt their own repairs because the world (known as Below) is very dangerous.

The reason that Below is dangerous is because the Arcane have a sophisticated base there that they don't want anyone to find. They regularly stock Below with nasty roaming monsters gleaned from hundreds of worlds to discourage both snooping and settlement (DM's note: Everything from cartoon characters to modern soldiers can confront PCs on Below, which is covered with dense tropical jungles and shallow seas.)

The Arcane run expensive, carefully guided monster hunts on Below as pleasure outings for space-weary adventurers. These can serve as rest-and-recreation, experience building, and warm-up outings, but adventurers with "great hunter" dreams are warned that assassins and pirates view such outings as excellent opportunities to take target practice, eliminate rivals or targets they've been hired to kill, or pick up a few useful magic items or good weapons by eliminating the owners.

## The Guardian Ring

Refuge itself is protected by a ring of 24 stone golems floating around the base. These guardians are a gnomish invention known as "space golems." They can be found elsewhere in space, usually guarding planetoid bases or gnomish cities on worlds that gnomes share with threatening neighbors.

Fitted with minor helms, each space golem has these statistics: AR 1; Saves as: stone; Weight: one ton; MC C. Its SR depends on the spelljammer aboard it (in this case, all are priests of at least 5th level, giving the golems SR 2). Each golem has 60 hp (6 hull points) and carries only enough air for very short voyages (e.g., to Welcome and back) or for close-range battles. The *slow* power of each space golem has been lost in its conversion to a ship (it affected the operation of the helms and was removed).

The captain (in all cases, a 4th-level warrior) and the spelljammer work in a chamber within the golem's head. The eyes of a space golem emit *continual light* beams when metal covers are slid back from two wands nested in stone niches just beneath the eyeballs. The eyes also serve as viewports for the crew.

A large cabin on the golem's back contains four gunners (all 1st-level warriors) and two medium ballistas. The space golem can also ram (treat as a normal ram attack) and use its fists to punch or grab. The fists of the golem are controlled by the captain and his second, operating levers set around them in seats located in front of the helm. Each fist may strike once per round (at THAC0 7 and strength 22) at a ship or target in the same hex only, doing 2-12 hp damage. Every 10 hp damage equals 1 hull point (round fractions down) if directed against a ship. Attack rolls of 19 or 20 also mean a critical-hit result against the ship. A blow that strikes a character does 2-12 hp damage. Items on or held by struck characters should save vs. crushing blow, and a successful strength check by the victim is required to avoid falling once struck.

A "grab" attempt by the golem can grapple a ship or shear off its superstructure (depending on what item the hands controller was grabbing at). A ship can be grappled for up to two rounds before the golem's hand slips free.

If a victim is grabbed, the grip does 3-24 hp crushing damage, takes the character off his feet, and forces all items worn or carried by the character to save vs. crushing blow at -1. Grasped characters may wriggle free in two rounds. If held on the round after being grasped, a character may automatically strike the hand with a weapon but may not cast spells or perform other intricate activities (such as drinking potions, reading, picking locks,

getting items out of backpacks, and the like). If the hand tries to grab another being, the original victim automatically escapes. If the hand strikes a blow at another object while grasping a victim, the victim receives 1d8 hp further damage.

Each golem's hand is considered to have 10 hp (1 hull point) for purposes of breaking it to render further grabbing attempts impossible. The shoulder of a golem is also considered to have 10 hp or 1 hull point for the same purposes.

A golem can throw grasped beings or rocks, doing 2-20 hp (or 1-2 hull point) damage to things struck by such missiles. The missile itself suffers double that damage!

The golems are usually crewed by hired human spacers. Each command cabin contains the captain, the on-duty spelljammer, and an off-duty spelljammer who has full spells. The spelljammers are all priests of not less than 5th level, so that they can heal their fellow crewmembers.

The Arcane, who don't miss a trick, have taken care to establish temples to all of these priests' gods in Refuge, to give spacers a place to worship (a 5% tithe of all offerings goes to the Arcane) and to permit the priests to gain spells in answer to their prayers.

## The Salvage Ring

The Arcane buy fragments of old spaceship hulls (no questions asked) for scrap-reuse, salvage, and spare-parts purposes. These are tethered together in a huge ring orbiting Below, inside ("below") the orbit of Refuge. Any ship limping into Refuge minus its turret, mast, anchor, or the like can find a replacement—for a price.

Pirates, scavvers, and other spacefaring monsters have been known to lurk amid the grinding, ever-changing chaos of the Salvage Ring, but the Arcane use hired Giff patrols to prevent all attempts to steal from the ring or permanently settle in it.

## Arcane trade

On Refuge, the Arcane sell a wide variety of helms, weapons, and so on. For those who can afford it (the term "Arcane robbery" is used in arcane space in the same way we speak of "highway robbery"), just about anything is available on Refuge—in every size and in matched sets.

Special orders appear mysteriously on Refuge by means of Arcane subterfuge. Their most common trick is to release a barge from a planetoid known only to the Arcane, on the outer edges of the crystal sphere, on a course that will bring it behind Below. The needed materials are shuttled up to the barge from Below's base by one of the spacecraft that the Arcane keep hidden there. The barge then proceeds grandly on to Refuge, appearing "out of nowhere" and enhancing the repu-

tation of the Arcane for mystery and power. Such barges are often towed by sarphardin.

### Link-hops

Various small flitters run regularly between Below, the Salvage Ring, and various points of interest on Refuge, including the banks, safe-storage area, dry docks, hospitals, casino, and taverns. Flitters are typically ships in the worst possible condition (to discourage theft) and are always unarmed. Their crews, however, are always heavily armed with rare magical items (sets of *iron bands of Bilarro* and *darts of paralyzation* are favorites) as well as conventional weaponry, and are trained and positioned so as to protect the helm and spelljammer from attacks.

### Refuge—the surface

Refuge's surface appears to be a huge, well-tended garden, studded with luxurious homes (rental villas for spacefarers) and occasional larger structures—the banks, the Great Vault (a safe-storage fortress), several large hotels, two dry docks, some hospitals (perhaps the most advanced medical treatment centers found in known space), an elegant if sometimes deadly high-stakes casino, and several taverns. These larger features are widely separated for safety's sake, in the event of an attack from space. Refuge is not undefended, of course. Here and there amid the plush gardens, heavy catapult and heavy ballista turrets rise on stony towers, their ammunition stored in caverns beneath them.

Refuge has very seldom been attacked, however. The Arcane are said to defend it with a secret weapon—some sort of planar vortex that sucks ships into a whirling maelstrom in space, from which they never emerge! (It is not known whether such a weapon is in place on Refuge or whether this is merely a clever rumor started by the Arcane; few seem eager to find out.)

### Refuge—within

The interior of Refuge is honeycombed with many secret tunnels. These lead to alcoves and chambers crammed with oxygen-producing plants, prison cells, helm and locator storage vaults, etc. The moon's atmosphere is artificially renewed on a constant basis by several hidden *crowns of the void* (detailed in SJR1 *Lost Ships*), as well as by the plants, trees, and mosses on the surface and in the tunnels.

A common (and true) legend among visitors to Refuge holds that there is a secret way or three into every building, and that it is possible to travel between any two places on Refuge without ever emerging on the surface—if one knows how. The Arcane do not encourage beings

of other races to roam the darkened, muffled tunnels, but almost everyone who visits Refuge takes at least one curious look into the dark ways below, often while visiting one of Refuge's taverns (such as the rowdy Horn Sharr). Those who have done so often report that strange creatures and even weirder animated metal automata move through the tunnels from time to time. Powerful wizards are often seen enjoying a quiet pipe by the light of some *dancing lights* as they stroll home through the dark—and no one bothers them. Beings of lesser power, however, avoid using the tunnels except in desperation or in large groups; most regulars of Refuge use one or two short, known underground routes and ignore other opportunities to go below. The oldest inhabitants of Refuge sometimes whisper about the Watcher Below—a gigantic beholder that drifts silently along the lightless ways, killing and eating those creatures it catches, and taking any valuables they carried—including magical items, which it uses against opponents.

These tales are true and yet not true. For example, the Watcher Below exists, but it is an undead beholder controlled by the Arcane, used to capture, slay, or rob specific creatures. It uses no magic except that of its surviving eyestalks, but it always cleans up after itself by taking bodies and gear away to hidden caverns using its mouth. The items are retained by the Arcane; if they don't see a use for an intact body, it finds its way onto the fertilizer shuttle to Below—or onto the plates of daring eaters who sample special menus in the casino.

### Business on Refuge

**Banks:** The banks on Refuge guarantee return of all monies. If they are robbed (and no one can remember a successful hold-up or theft from a bank on Refuge), all deposits are covered. They also give out information on accounts to nobody except heirs in the event of the proven death of a depositor. Several currencies are in use, gold pieces being the standard for small amounts, and gems or smoke-powder charges seeing common use for larger amounts. The Arcane are equipped to handle all currencies except slaves, and they often take ships or ship equipment "in trade" for discounted values.

Admittance to an account is by presentation of a secret symbol drawn by the account holder in his own blood, matched against a specimen left in the banks keeping. A pass phrase must be used simultaneously, and this admits the account holder to a heavily armored chamber. Inside are several guardian golems whose weapons and powers are well displayed (including glowing rods that have no function at all except to give would-be robbers a fear of

some unknown, vastly powerful weapon) and an expressionless Arcane banker, whose considerable weapons and powers (as chosen by the DM) are hidden until needed.

**The Great Vault:** One bank administers the safe-storage area: a series of secure caverns in which depositors can leave their magically imprisoned friends, foes, monsters, or artifacts for rainy-day use or to meet a future debt. It is rumored that this vault contains magical items of awesome power, but that the Arcane contrive to lose *spheres of annihilation* and the *orbs of world-rending* developed by mad illithids (a weapon whose making is now thankfully a lost process).

**Dry docks:** The dry docks on Refuge are vast. Each can handle 30 ships at a time and is always full, except for the two emergency bays the Arcane keep open to accommodate those clients who barely manage to limp (or crash) into Refuge.

There is no better repair facility in all of space, when it comes to repairing a wide variety of ships and replacing key components (such as helms, weapons, and armor plating) in a short time. The rates are very steep, but the work is very good. Ship captains who nurse aging galleons and venerable ships of even older designs around the spaceways often take their vessels to no other mechanics. This is the reason for Refuge's constant dock waiting list. "It's worth the sail to Refuge," as the saying goes.

**Hospitals:** Refuge's hospitals are also very good. High-level clerics of Ptah and several gods of healing, succor, and mercy are in constant attendance on the sick. Notable among Refuge hospital staff are expertise in the recognition and treatment of all manner of poisons (bolstered by the presence of a heavily guarded, lush, and sprawling antidote garden), and representation on staff of all major spacefaring races, so that conditions and symptoms peculiar to a race can be swiftly diagnosed and treated.

**Mercenaries and more:** There are Giff mercenaries for hire on Refuge (and one can buy the smoke powder to hire them here, too). It is true, as they say, that "you can get anything you can afford" on Refuge, but the Arcane are interested in keeping everyday conditions on Refuge itself and in its crystal sphere very much as they are now. An adventurer wishing to purchase several thousand warships and the ammunition, crews, and weaponry to go with them would encounter delays, quality control problems with the weapons, all sorts of beings who'd like to part him from the money with which he'll pay for all of this, and so on.

### Trouble on Refuge

All is not well on Refuge (of course).

Dopplegangers, mimics, and mind flayers have begun to infiltrate the populace, and there have been several nasty little struggles between various rival groups among them and the Arcane. Smuggling cabals and military brotherhoods have also thought it a good tactic to take a hand or two in how things are run on Refuge, and are joined by individual thieves, fences, and mercenaries.

Visitors to Refuge may be recruited by one or more of the rival factions in this ongoing covert power struggle. More often, visitors are manipulated to serve as unwitting tools in this or that plan. This often involves the PCs attacking an "enemy" who thinks them to be in the hire of a rival, and whose forces may be killed or weakened in the battle—while the "enemy's" property is stolen or vandalized by the manipulators. If this sounds complicated, be warned: This sort of intrigue is the order of the day on Refuge!

### The law

Justice on Refuge is administered by the Arcane, who have a loose, unwritten, but widely understood code of behavior roughly equivalent to that of most tolerant, merchant-dominated medieval cities (such as Waterdeep in the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ campaign). The Arcane serve as on-the-spot, no-delay judges, and they customarily consider appeals only upon offers of astronomical bribes.

Most punishments involve confiscations of goods and fines. The Arcane willingly deal in mortgages and other forms of credit, because survival as spacefaring beings for debtors often depends on Arcane supplies, giving the Arcane a good chance of collecting what is owed.

The Arcane have no regular police on Refuge, only a sort of "dogcatcher" team of Arcane that arrives to charm, hold, drug, bind, or cage unruly beings of any race, then cart them off to a "cooling house" to simmer down, receive medical treatment, or be quietly interrogated and terminated. This force is used only as a last resort, after hirelings have failed to keep the peace. Its composition and weaponry are left to the DM. Beings who really anger the Arcane can expect to be stripped of all belongings and "accidentally" introduced into the clutches of illithid or neogi slavers, far from their homeworlds or allies.

The Arcane themselves keep a low profile, except for a few ambassadors who can always be reached for quiet negotiations, such as Nuath (usually to be found at the third table on the right at the aptly named The Low Dive tavern), and Maalbrynn (who frequents the benches, pools, and bowers of The Sly Wink Dining and Wining Gardens for Friendly Folk). There's more money to be made in allowing the

other spacefaring races to continually fight and scheme among themselves.

The Arcane keep law and order, however, in a curious manner. Temporarily hired hit teams of adventurers are often assigned to guard visitors, control crowds at entertainments, assassinate or guard individuals, break up disturbances and gatherings, foil expeditions into the under-tunnels, and so on. Adventurers who visit Refuge may be called upon by a short, impeccably polite human or two; these urbane types represent the Arcane in less important negotiations of all sorts. These include the roly-poly, mustachioed man known only as Harmond and an urbane, witty, calculating lady (whose hair is always swept into fantastic arrangements involving filigreed crowns and gem-dangling tiaras) known as Vrentyna of the Hundred Keys (to mens' rooms, tavern regulars say, not joking). For 1,000 gp a day, a little job like breaking up a tavern brawl that's expected to erupt in the next three days may seem attractive indeed.

But taking on such commissions, of course, will win PCs the undying enmity of those who are behind the troubles. Such troublemakers tend to be agents of the neogi, beholder, or illithid races, as well as a few dangerous humans who think themselves fit to rule all of wildspace. The DM can spin many continuing adventures out of such alliances and hatreds, to bear out the rueful spacer saying that "There's no safe place like Refuge."

### Regulars of Refuge

The DM is encouraged to develop a small cast of enigmatic regular NPCs to people Refuge. A few suggested characters are given here, though their true natures and powers are left to the DM to foil those players who Read All And Know Too Much.

**Halass "The Nimble":** This cynical, smooth-tongued little man is often seen in the taverns of Refuge, his hands toying with the curves of a flagon. The level of the liquid within never seems to go down much, and Halass never seems to do much or go anywhere much—save perhaps on a stroll through the park paths to the next tavern. Yet he seems to know where anything or anyone can be found on Refuge—for a price.

Questioners who reveal too much to Halass may find out the hard way that he got to a particular place or thing before they did, and removed something (or several things) that they were after. Whether he is himself a master thief or merely has very good connections remains unknown. It is certain that three neogi using magical disguises once assaulted him in a tavern on Refuge—and wound up very dead, without even managing to spill the little man's drink.

**Strantor "One-Eye":** This 7'-tall, battered

looking, laconic man sports an eyepatch and some well-used blades at all times. He can be seen in taverns and festive houses on Refuge, watchfully guarding this or that temporary employer. Strantor is said to be one of the best bodyguards anywhere, with several magical tricks hidden about his person, including something mysterious and terrible under his eyepatch. He is quite callous and readily cuts his losses and leaves if a client gets killed or is taken by strong forces. But he never switches employers in the middle of a job nor takes bribes. One must have some rules, after all, even on Refuge.

**Asreena Chalorna:** An agile dancer of haunting beauty, Asreena came to Refuge some years ago in the hold of a pirate ship whose crew had almost entirely succumbed to some strange malady. The captain and his last hands soon perished in the taverns of Refuge, presumably from the same sickness (cynical observers termed it "a surfeit of poison"), and Asreena claimed the ship and its cargo as her own. Selling it off to a desperate buyer, Asreena became instantly wealthy.

Over the years since, a series of shrewd deals, fast courtships, and timely maladies among her husbands have made Asreena very wealthy indeed. She still enjoys courting and marrying visitors to Refuge, however—and has managed to avoid being killed by the few who escaped her clutches yet left most of the contents of their purses and coffers behind.

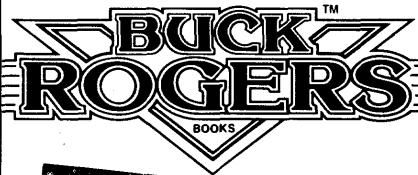
**Shaundan Thyritar, "The Mad One":** This tall, gaunt, heavily muscled adventurer was once a bold and proud pirate captain but is now a mere shadow of his former self. He met up with some strange beast in the starry deeps and did not escape with his sanity intact.

"The Mad One" spends much of his time drinking alone in the taverns of Refuge, watching those around him suspiciously and loudly whispering, "I know the secret of the Arcane!" If he ever did know this secret, Shaundan's crazed mind cannot recall it now, even with magical scrying, curing, or other aid.

Shaundan whiles away his time in his own little world, occasionally emerging with glee and gusto to participate in a tavern brawl, attacking indiscriminately but with deadly intent. He also offers himself to aid causes or needy PCs that he overhears, and accepts hire-money as a bodyguard, adventurer, or even cargo-loader (all of which bring him coins needed for his tavern visits). Occasionally lucid and even noble and heroic, he is unreliable and erratic—but PCs may find his helping hand when they least expect it, in the taverns, tunnels, and dark depths of Refuge.

**Belndorn "The Battleaxe":** This hearty, hardened space veteran carries the scars of a hundred space-combats and can

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gruffly tell you all about every one of them, too. A dwarf of considerable battle skill, Belndorn is never without at least two throwing-axes (even when surprised in bed!) and a lit, stinking cigar. He wears an incongruous mixture of clothing from several worlds, with odd pieces of armor underneath (bolstered by magical *bracers*), and disgusts the delicate of stomach by his habit of chewing his cigars from one end while smoking them from the other.

Belndorn is willing to pitch into a tavern brawl for the fun of it all. For a price (or if a beautiful human, elven, or dwarven female catches his eye), he'll even accompany PCs on an adventure or an outing or two on Refuge, but he'll never stop emitting gruff and salty advice from one breath to the next. He regards all elven males as spineless, silly dandies, and most human male spacers as pitiful idiots—and he tells them all so. His continued survival is a testament to his speed, skill, and hidden magical items that he's picked up over the years. Like many spacegoing dwarves, Belndorn seems to have less trouble working with magic than the dwarves of Krynn, Oerth, and Toril.

**Helm-ho, the Faceless Void:** This mysterious being can often be found in tavern back rooms and private parties of Refuge, and he takes particular delight in sitting

quietly in darkened bedchambers until the occupants of said rooms are up to something interesting (particularly plotting adventuring deeds that skirt laws closely, or involve secrecy)—whereupon Helm-ho makes it clear that they're not alone.

When attacked, Helm-ho always laughs and does nothing. He (or it—the voice is deep and masculine, but that may not mean anything) appears as a man-size suit of full plate armor with an open-fronted helm. There is nothing in the helm; it seems to be worn by something eyeless and invisible. If Helm-ho is attacked, the suit of armor simply—and abruptly—falls apart with a clatter, revealing nothing to be within.

There will be no further trace of Helm-ho for at least 2-12 rounds, even if the armor is locked in a chest, scattered, or destroyed. Then Helm-ho will reappear, with new armor if necessary, and greet his destroyers with the same deep, jovial voice as before.

The true nature of this being remains a mystery. Several adventurers have managed to assemble half a dozen useful suits of armor on a visit to Refuge by judiciously destroying Helm-ho at the right times. The greedy are warned that the Arcane seem angered by attacks on Helm-ho (who may serve them as a spy of sorts), and they often send hired hit teams to deal with those who attack the walking, talking suit of armor.

## Rescue is at hand

Every so often, the local adherents of the Pragmatic Order of Thought (a military brotherhood described in the SPELL-JAMMER boxed set) launch a raid against what they see as lawless or shady elements on Refuge. The Arcane find the POTs forces useful as a "wild card" that breaks up the budding plans of the various cabals and factions that wish to seize control of Refuge. The Arcane therefore let this brotherhood operate freely.

PCs who wind up imprisoned or enslaved may be rescued by a POTs raid. The DM should stage a raid for local color and entertainment soon after the PCs first arrive on Refuge, then save the POTs forces for later PC aid. In this case, POTs members will attack whoever the PCs' captors are, in a noisy, breakneck, dangerous assault. At least one rescuer will hold a flaming torch high, to let everyone know who's responsible. Injured PCs could well wind up in a hostel or safehouse run by a member of POT, listening to a lot of plans and appeals for temporary PC aid in assaulting this prison or that slaver.

The DM should use this helping hand only if the PCs are unable to free themselves. It should never occur so often that PCs begin to rely upon it was a backup. Remember the Sembian saying: "Adventurers dig their own graves." Ω



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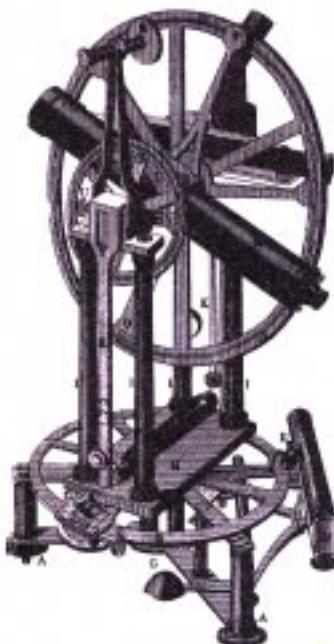
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# Bazaar of the Bizarre

Magic from  
the stars

by  
Steven E. Schend



*My esteemed colleague Elminster,*

*I trust you and Lhaeo arrived safely home after your last visit to the Rock of Bral. We truly enjoy your visits, as we hear so little of our beloved Realms, and little Lara does so love Lhaeo's stories. My wife thanks you for the Calishite spices and extends an open invitation to our house. Mynda has also requested that, on your next visit, you should "kindly leave that cauldron of stench you call a pipe in your tower." My wife, she adores you so.*

*Enough chatter—on to wizardly matters. You had requested a compilation of some items weak and mighty to be found throughout the Spheres, with delivery of the same to you posthaste. I have cobbled together a partial list of such items that may intrigue and surprise you. Any that are marked with prices are in stock at my curio shop on the Rock, with which you are well acquainted. My influence being a tad less expansive than yours, I have only reliable information on the "unique items"—no samples. I could finance a party to recover the items, but the adventurers here tend to be . . . questionable. I could send more items to you for study, provided you could find suitable acquisitions agents. From the adventurers that you ramble on about, might the lovely maiden with the tattoos be available for hire? Also, you made mention of a young lad by the name of Wyvernspur who sounds of much promise. As you know, they will be well paid; besides, the experiences to be found in arcane space will make this venture as worthwhile and educational for them as for us.*

*This compilation is incomplete, but the facts are wholly accurate. The prices are mine (out-of-stock items are not priced), and I charge only 20% more than the cost of the item's components, not like that fat fool Gaspar and his "finder's fees"! I have started creating some orbus rings using my research and the help of an Arcane acquaintance; the first is marked for our friend Khelben upon completion. All this you can now forward to those "chroniclers" of yours. Just be sure I receive my, as you called them, "German beers" in payment for my services.*

*May the light of Selune fall favorably upon thee, my friend, until we meet again.*

*Most sincerely yours,*

*Garnalon*

## Personal items

**Atmosphere cloak:** Also known as a *cloak of air pockets*, this appears to be an average cloak and hood. When worn outside any planetary atmospheres, the cloak magically doubles the size of the wearer's air envelope, which greatly increases a character's survival time away from a ship or planetoid. A human-size air envelope increases to hold enough fresh air for 4-40 turns.

When the cloak is worn in the presence of fouled or stale air, the cloak generates fresh air around its wearer three times daily. This envelope exists only within the hood of the cloak, which must be pulled around the wearer's head to be of use. This pocket of fresh air stays in effect for 2-20 turns, after which there is a 1-4 hour delay before it can generate another fresh air pocket. Note that this does not confer immunity to poisonous gases; the cloak simply adds fresh air within the confines of the hood but does not remove any poisons from the air. However, the wearer does gain a +1 to his saves vs. poisonous gases and vapors either in wildspace or within planetary atmospheres. (Cost: 9,000 gp; XP value: 1,000)

**Boots of star striding:** These boots are similar to all magical boots, shrinking or expanding to fit any S-M size creature. However, their usefulness is limited to space adventurers. These boots allow a wearer to walk along a gravity plane without drifting away from the ship. The boots allow movement across any gravity planes, though movement is half normal due to the lack of a solid surface.

A character falling or jumping from a ship toward a gravity plane will come to rest on the plane with no oscillation through the plane. Any character falling prone on the plane will remain there; when the character orients himself as to which end is up and changes his position, the boots interact with the gravity plane and the wearer "bobs" up to the surface of the gravity plane until he stands on it.

The boots allow for running and jumping to other gravity planes at the wearer's regular movement rate. Due to the flexibility of the gravity planes, the boots give the wearer a Jumping proficiency when used to leap onto other gravity planes (see page 61 of the 2nd Edition *Players Handbook*). The wearer can also use the Jumping proficiency when jumping from the gravity plane to the ship with no damage or penalties. (Cost: 20,000 gp; XP value: 3,000)

**Orbus ring:** This rare ring appears to be carved from ivory with strands of platinum twining around the band. No magical effects are noted by the wearer of such a ring unless he sits in a spelljamming helm. The ring, utilizing the remains of an orbus and some of its residual magic, increases a ship's SR by one rank. Thus, a

7th-level transmuter seated at a minor helm would move the ship at SR 2; with an *orbus ring*, the ship moves with SR 3.

These rings are highly prized by spelljamming mages and have been touted as a great increase in spelljamming technology. Actually, the secret of making *orbus rings* was lost for nearly a century until a hidden cache was discovered on the Rock of Bral. The original rings varied in intensity, some even granting an SR bonus of +3! Gamalon Idogyr, an expert on magical items and spelljamming magics, is currently the only known distributor of the new *orbus rings*. The methods of their creation remain a closely guarded secret (Cost: 18,000 gp; XP value: 2,000)

## Ship Items

**Cabinet of air restoration:** With the recent flood of groundling adventurers moving into space, the Arcane have introduced a new item needed on many heavily laden ships: an air supply device. Many of these are being included with helms to new buyers (instead of offering helms with portal locators), but they are also sold to older customers at the given price.

The *cabinet of air restoration* works on the same principle as a furnace helm, by drawing magic from magical items. The small cabinet stands 2' tall by 1' wide; two small doors in its front open to reveal a hollow area 10" square in size. The front and sides of the cabinet are of dark hardwood, but the base and repository within the cabinet seem to be made of crystal—the same crystal found in many minor helms. When an item is placed inside the cabinet, the crystal glows a deep green, brightening when it is producing fresh air. When a charged magical item is placed within the cabinet, 1-3 charges are immediately drained away prior to any use. With each subsequent use, the *cabinet of air restoration* drains one charge from a magical item and generates 50 cubic yards of fresh air, enough to support up 12 people for one week before the air becomes foul; one command word activates this function.

A second command word activates the full potential of the *cabinet of air restoration*, allowing it to regenerate the entire air envelope of the ship. When commanded, the cabinet drains 1-8 charges for every 10 tons of the ship and restores the atmosphere by one rank. For example, to restore the atmosphere of a hammership from fouled to fresh air, the cabinet would drain 6d8 charges from the item. The atmosphere is now completely fresh and will support a crew of 60 for four to eight months with its regenerated atmosphere. (Cost: 6,000 gp)

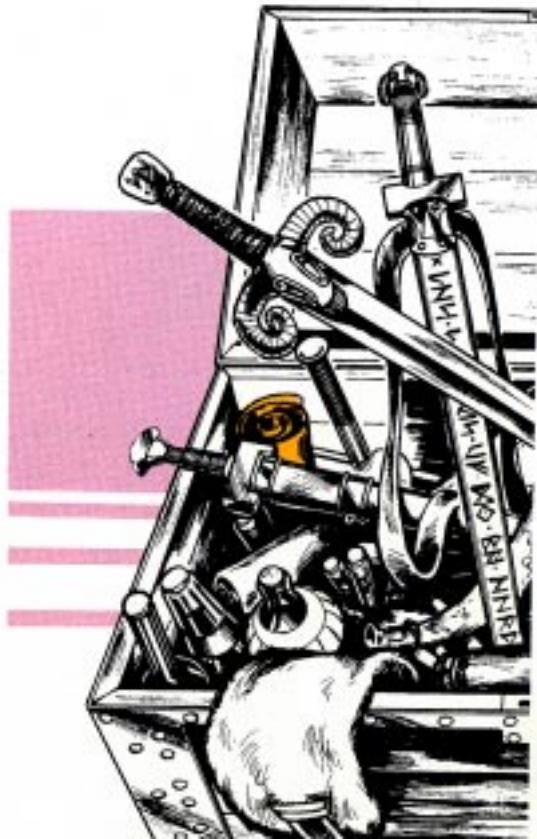
**Cloaking helm:** Developed by a team of Arcane and wizards of no small measure, the *cloaking helm* has once again expanded the levels of spelljamming tech-

nology. Developed ostensibly for the Seekers to aid them in their surreptitious information gathering, the *cloaking helm* came into high demand with militaristic movements across the stars. As word leaked out of these new helms, assassins appeared virtually overnight, slaying many of the wizards involved in their creation. Those few who survived are scattered about the stars, reclusive as many wizards are. The *cloaking helms* are sold through the Arcane now, but they are making space a treacherous place to travel.

The *cloaking helm* allows the spelljamming mage to divert power from moving the ship to wrapping an illusion of empty space about the ship. This prevents the ship from being seen from afar. The cloak doesn't inhibit the spelljamming mage from seeing the surroundings of the ship, although those on deck can see only 300' in any direction.

The only way to detect a cloaked ship, without *ESP*, *detection*, or scrying spells, is by noticing a refractive effect the cloaked ship has on bright light. If a cloaked ship passes closer than 1,000 yards to another ship, the space covered by the cloak appears blurry, and light coming from behind and through the cloaked ship changes colors, creating a slight rainbow effect around the edges of the cloaked ship. This is hard to see at a distance of 1,000 yards, but it can be spotted by look-outs expecting trouble (give a base 10% chance to spot a cloak, and modify according to situations).

The cloak can be maintained for a maximum of three turns a day and can be



active only when the ship is below spelljamming speed. Standard *invisibility* rules apply; if the cloaked ship attacks by using ramming or missiles, any contact with the illusion causes it to dissipate. Thus, a cloaked ship cannot attack while cloaked (though it gains a +4 on surprise rolls if entering the battle cloaked, dispelling the illusion with a ram to an enemy!). (Cost: 350,000 gp)

**Everfull cask:** These casks appear to be the same as any water containers found aboard ship. Each contains a special enchantment that causes the cask to fill with five gallons of fresh spring water once a day. If the cask is damaged or its cover is lost, no water is created. The casks fill themselves and do not operate using command words.

Created by a clerical order of Eldath, *everfull casks* fulfill a multitude of purposes within Realmspace. Ships with the casks need never worry about short water supplies or foul water during long voyages. Planetary colonies with water shortages are aided by reliable sources of water. And the Eldathian priests who create these wonderful items raise money through the sale of the *everfull casks* to finance temples to Eldath throughout civilized space. This money also brings more of Eldath's clerics into space, thus leading to a spreading of her religion. It is widely proclaimed by her priests that Eldath's word will flow across the stars, and the goddess of singing waters will be found everywhere in her water and worship. As of yet, Eldath's worship is still limited to Realmspace, but her followers

are growing steadily, and her priests' words may yet be proven true.

Note: These casks will not work efficiently if the ship carrying them leaves Realmspace. Each cask then produces only five gallons of water per week when outside the crystal sphere of the Realms, because of the limited influence of Eldath beyond Realmspace. (Cost: 3,600 gp)

#### **Figurehead of wondrous power:**

This sort of carved statue, usually a simple decoration on the prow of any seafaring ship, has been magically endowed with a variety of powers to benefit a spelljamming ship. The magic resides in the carving process and the wood itself. Few mages know woodcraft well enough to make them alone, and even fewer woodcarvers know the magecraft to power these impressive items.

Each of the three known types of *figureheads* is carved from a different wood and bears a different gem. It taps into the spelljamming energies of a ship, allowing its powers to become activated. The *figurehead* operates only under the command of a spelljamming mage of 10th level or greater, and the ship must have a major helm for the item to fully function.

The *figurehead of attacks* is carved from ash wood and has a ruby embedded in its brow. When used with a major helm, the *figurehead of attacks* allows the spelljamming mage mobility while seated on the helm. Usually a spelljamming mage "senses" the ship around him, but this item allows the mage to propel the ship and simultaneously focus his senses through the figurehead, as if his spirit inhabited its body. The figurehead is also animated by the mage, and as long as the mage maintains his concentration, the figurehead remains mobile. (Many owners of this item simply place it on deck to fully use its powers.) The *figurehead of attacks* even allows the mage to engage in combat while the mage is on the helm. The figurehead attacks as a warrior with a level equal to the ship's rating. Its hardwood fists each do 1-4 hp bludgeoning damage. If the mage's concentration is broken by a critical hit on the ship, difficult maneuvering, acceleration to spelljamming speed, etc., the figurehead becomes motionless and no longer under the mage's control. The *figurehead of attacks* can be animated for up to 20 consecutive rounds once per week. (Cost: 54,000 gp; XP value: 5,000 xp)

The *figurehead of disguise* is carved from cherry wood and has a large black onyx set in its forehead. Whereas the other *figureheads of wondrous power* are usually human in form, this figurehead is usually carved to resemble a couatl, its tail stretching beneath the prow and its wings embracing the sides of the ship. When the spelljamming mage activates this item's power, the ship's image wavers for a round until the illusion is set. Each figure-

head of this type is keyed for a different but flawless illusion that alters the ship's appearance. The figurehead can erect an illusion of additional armaments, manned and ready; it can project illusory top sails or armor plating, making the ship appear to be impregnable. The figurehead creates only one specific illusion that lasts until contact with the illusion dispels it. Many pirates would hesitate to attack a ship loaded to the gills with bombardments and crack crews manning the ropes! The illusions are not effective in battle, and they last only until dispelled or until the mage loses concentration on the illusion. These illusions can be summoned no more than once per day. (Cost: 27,000 gp)

As its name suggests, the *figurehead of speed* boosts the ship's rating. Carved from beech and granted emerald eyes, this figurehead adds two effective levels to the spelljamming mage for determining the ship's rating. Thus, a 12th-level mage seated on a major helm and utilizing a *figurehead of speed* acts as a 14th-level mage, effectively moving the ship at SR 7 instead of the normal SR 6.

This figurehead is active only at tactical speeds. However, this additional speed makes it more difficult to maneuver; the ship loses one maneuverability rank due to increased speed and abnormal control of the ship. The speed does not affect true travel times, since it doesn't operate at spelljamming speed. The *figurehead of speed* can be used for a cumulative duration of one hour per week; after one hour of enhanced speed in one week, the figurehead remains inoperable for 1-4 days, recharging its magics. (Cost: 36,000 gp)

**"Griffon's claw" grappling hook:** This elaborately carved grappling hook resembles a giant raptor's claw. When a command word is spoken, the hook *Levitates* up and flies toward its target (pointed out by the controlling character) up to ZOO' away. The claw has a THAC0 of 12 and digs into the wood of their target ship. The claw cannot be removed from the wood, but the wood may be cut and the claw will remain in it. Only a second command word from the controlling character releases the claw's grip. (Cost: 450 gp per set of two; XP value: 50)

**Mage Shot:** *Mage shot* is a generic term used for a number of magical weapons found in Realmspace. The term refers to ceramic catapult shot, either enchanted or filled with some potions. All *mage shot* is weighted for a light catapult, and only one shot can be fired at a time.

*Mage shot* can be filled with any potion that has external effects, such as *oil of impact* or *oil of fiery burning*. Some *mage shot* contents are new and do not conform to any of the known magical oils. A few of the more common missiles are described as follows. The cost of *mage shot* depends upon the potion it holds.

The light ceramic of the *mage* shot is quite strong and will not shatter while in storage or while rolling loose on deck. Only high-speed impact with its target causes the shot to break open, releasing its magical contents. Note that giants, with their missile-throwing abilities, are strong enough to use *mage* shot effectively.

**Shatter shot** is a variant of *mage* shot filled with a mixture that causes an explosion upon impact. The fluid expands rapidly when it comes into contact with air, and it essentially blows the stone apart when it hits. Persons within 30' of the impact area take 1d12 hp damage from shrapnel. If a *shatter* shot hits a ship's hull, it causes 1d2 hull points damage. (Cost: 750 gp per shot; XP value: 80)

**Skunk shot** is a catapult stone filled with a liquid that evaporates quickly in open air; the thick green fluid combines with the air in a ship's atmospheric envelope and generates a greenish, billowing fog. The fog expands to a 20'-radius cloud centered on the point of impact, duplicating the effects of a *stinking cloud* on crew-members within its confines, and obscures normal vision within the cloud. This malodorous fog dissipates in 2-8 rounds, but its stench lingers for an additional 2-12 rounds. If the optional morale rules are used, the effects of *skunk shot* weakens the morale and fighting spirit of the crew by -2. In addition, the cloud mingles with the atmospheric envelope of the ship, reducing the fresh air in the atmosphere by one week's worth and may possibly causing premature fouling of the atmosphere. *Skunk shot* will not deplete the quality of air in an atmosphere envelope if the envelope is already fouled. (Cost: 450 gp; XP value: 50)

**Termite shot** is a magical catapult stone that releases a brown, molasseslike syrup upon impact. The syrup immediately bubbles and spreads out over a 5-10' diameter area, eating away at the wood of the target ship. This substance dissolves and weakens the wood, with each successful hit causing 1d4 hull points damage per round for 1d3 rounds. No known substance will stop this effect, but dispel *magic* halts its progress after one round. It is rumored that mages are working on a variant of *termite* shot that is equally effective on the rock and ceramic ships of the illithids and the neogi. The research process goes slowly, as the blood of purple worms and umber hulks cannot be commonly found without great risk. (Cost: 630 gp; XP value: 70)

**Oil of fire stilling:** This magical oil is purchased in five-gallon casks, and each cask holds enough oil to treat a galleon's main deck and masts. When applied to wooden planks, the oil's magic permeates the wood, giving it flame resistance. Freshly treated wood gains a +2 versus fire for 5-50 days. If the wood comes in

contact with flame, it contains the flame, not allowing it to spread. However, the oil dries out the wood, reducing its effectiveness to 4-40 days on subsequent applications. This oil has become quite popular with ships that sail the Flow, lessening the dangers of critically damaging a ship while sailing the flammable sea of space. (Cost: 1,800 gp per five-gallon cask)

### Unique devices

**Blackjammer's cutlass:** Revered by pirates and freebooters throughout wildspace, *Blackjammer's* cutlass is notorious as the ultimate freebooter's weapon. The possessor of this weapon is usually held to be a great captain as well as a fierce warrior. If this cutlass is wielded in battle, the morale of the associated pirate crew gains a +3 bonus.

This weapon is a heavy cutlass of ancient design, with an elaborate hilt depicting a sailor being keelhauled. The blade is remarkably light compared to other cutlasses, but the standard damage applies (1d6/1d8). The blade does not resemble metal except for the hilt, its cutting edge being a nonreflective black substance resembling onyx.

The cutlass's power resembles that of a defender sword, but it allows for no choice of defense and offense bonuses. The sword grants a +2 to armor class and a +2 to hit and damage. In addition, the cutlass is intelligent and can speak Common and Elvish. Its knowledge of navigation and seamanship is exemplary and may account for the exceptional leadership abilities shown by its possessors. The cutlass can also conjure *darkness* 15' radius three times daily; its wielder is able to see through this magical darkness.

The sword's personality is quite strong, and accounts tell of the cutlass singing bawdy sea chanties and telling ribald jokes that make even a sailor blush. It reinforces piratical activity in its wielders, willing them to attack shipping for plunder or for mere entertainment. Over time, a person who has wielded the cutlass will talk like the sword itself, constantly muttering obscenities and repeatedly saying "Arg!" to himself.

*Blackjammer's* cutlass is reputed to have been forged in an old space colony within the Tears of Selune. It was not long before many shuddered in fear of the pirate Blackjammer. This pirate, named more for his weapon and its powers, raided early space outposts until his death 95 years past. Since parting from its initial owner, *Blackjammer's* cutlass has seen its share of battle. Most recently wielded by one Elsun, captain of the pirate ship *Dragon* Claw, the cutlass has been missing since Elsun's death at the hands of the Elven Imperial Navy. Attacking a merchant caravan enroute to Krynnspace, Elsun and the cutlass were repulsed by an attendant

Man-o'-War and Elsun was killed. The cutlass fell overboard in the melee and is assumed to be adrift in the Flow between Oerth and Krynn. (XP value: 3,000)

**Gauntlet of Tamus:** This heavy steel gauntlet's origin is unknown, despite any number of people who claim to know the "truth of such matters." This device, made of light chain mail and sheathed with metal plate, has become a much-prized tool for the giff—an item so great in power and danger combined that it would suit no other race. The *gauntlet of Tamus* received its name in an isolated skirmish during the Unhuman Wars. A giff mercenary found the gauntlet within a cave on an asteroid in the Calotian system. Wearing it into battle against some very surprised elves, this giff found the gauntlet's power of generating explosions of tremendous force much to his liking. Though he soon succumbed to excessive damage in battle (mostly caused by the gauntlet), Tamus secured a place for himself in giff folklore.

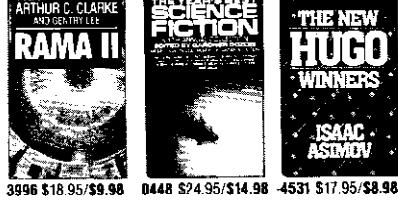
As any giff will tell you, the gauntlet's correct name is *The Mighty Gauntlet of Colonel Tamus Ewdun, Field Commander and Sub-Admiral of the Fleet*. The gauntlet can create an explosion three times per day, not unlike a fireball but without flames, that does 5-40 hp damage to any opponent within 5' of it. The blast is centered on the gauntlet, subjecting the wearer to half damage. Nonetheless, this fits the bill for the perfect giff weapon: It looks impressive with one's uniform, it does tremendous amounts of damage, and the explosions are fantastic displays of thunder and fury. It matters not at all that the wearer is subject to damage as well; any true giff would smile in the heart of such an explosion—it is the mark of a great warrior. The gauntlet's explosion can, if used against ships, do 1d4 hull points damage.

One other drawback of this item, and the main reason why the giff have retained it themselves, is that the gauntlet shrinks to fit the hand it is placed on and will not come off! Its magic seems tied to the wearer's life force, since the gauntlet comes loose upon the wearer's death. There are many mysteries sages would love to see answered about this item; quite frankly, though, there are few that wish to get close enough to its current wielder to ask about it.

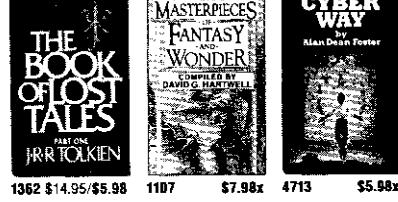
The *gauntlet of Tamus* is currently worn by General Saerlg Tomojak, diplomatic envoy for the giff to the Rock of Bral. His violent temper, undimmed even after years of military discipline, makes him a poor diplomat; nevertheless, people consider what Saerlg's angry fist can do and concede to his wishes. As such, the giff have received many "favors" from Prince Andru in return for keeping Bral's landscape intact, (XP value: 1,000) Ω



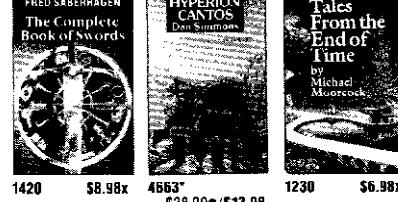
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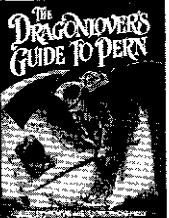
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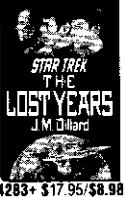
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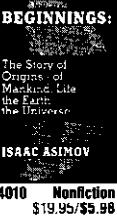
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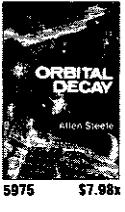
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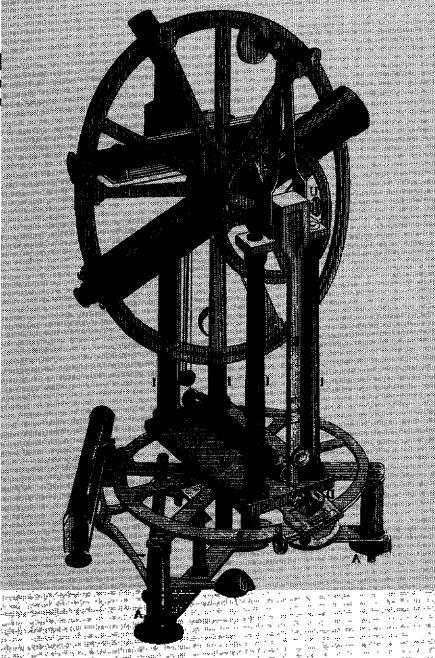
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The Astral plane is a big place, empty and lonely to those persons who dare to travel it. It is also dangerous, home to the marauding githyanki, and used by all sorts of unpleasant travelers from the outer planes as a halfway point in their journeys. Anyone who explores the Astral plane is pretty much on his own and must be ready at any time to be attacked, lost to the psychic wind, or flung into another plane by accidentally passing through the invisible backside of a color pool, as detailed in the AD&D® Manual of the Planes. There is, however, a safer way to travel that forlorn plane of silver mists.

About a thousand years ago, an archmage by the name of Peregrin became bored with adventuring on the Prime Material plane. He had overcome the most deadly foes of his world and had no interest in politics or a life of quiet research. Forsaking his home plane forever, he packed up his belongings and set off to seek a life in other realities and planes. He wandered dozens of planes, frequently crossing the Astral as he did so, and eventually it dawned on him that he could do something greater than simply wander in boredom. He decided to help travelers get around in the Astral plane, making their lives more interesting and exciting.

Drawing upon his extensive knowledge of the planes, Peregrin traveled to a dozen worlds to secure the materials and craftsmen for the vessels that would accomplish his dream. He envisioned a fleet of mighty ships that would sail the Astral plane, picking up voyagers from thousands of worlds and realities and taking them wherever they wished to go. No being would be discriminated against on the basis of race or alignment, so long as each obeyed ships' officers when on Peregrin's vessels.

The obstacles were frightful. The githyanki deeply resented the organized intru-



Artwork by Bob Klasnick

# Voidjammers!

An Astral taxi service for AD&D®  
1st Edition games

by Randal S. Doering

sion into their realm and attacked Peregrin many times, driving his vessels into psychic windstorms to ruin them and kill their crews. Outer-planar beings, thinking the vessels would be easy pickings, ravaged Peregrin's ships time and time again, often before the ships could complete their maiden voyages. Peregrin did not give in. He sought alliances with mighty beings of Neutrality and Good, and bound evil creatures to his will. He single-handedly blasted his way to a face-to-face

confrontation with the queen of the githyanki (this was long ago, when she was much less powerful than she is today) and forced her to call her people off from raiding his vessels. He negotiated docking ports in a hundred realities and forced the natives to accept his will when negotiation failed. Over the past 500 years, he has forged a mighty empire in the Astral plane, dedicated to helping the travelers of that plane get to their destinations quickly and safely.

## The voidjammers

The instruments of Peregrin's will are the voidjammers: 10 heavily armed, lightning-fast ships that cruise the Astral plane by means of a bizarre form of mental control. Each vessel is responsible for a thousand stops along its line, making about 10 stops a day and completing a cycle every 100 true days. The vessels never physically leave the Astral plane, for they are not seaworthy; instead, they cruise past various color pools and pick up whoever is waiting for transport there. Similarly, these vessels drop passengers off when the appropriate pool comes up. The voidjammers avoid wormholes at all costs, for such disturbances can damage or even destroy the ships.

Voidjammers are each roughly the size of a large merchant ship. Each is crewed by 30 sailors of many races and worlds, all professionals at sailing the Astral void. While their work in sailing the ship is minimal (the navigator and engineer do most of the actual work), these persons are responsible for such tasks as ship repairs, picking up and greeting passengers, making sure passengers are discharged at their proper destinations, loading and unloading cargo, and manning the ship's intrinsic weapons systems. Also included in this category are such persons as the chief cook and several assistants, valets, maids, and other servants. Sailors are all warriors of 2nd-5th level, though a variety of other classes is represented (DM's choice). all are able to defend their ship in close combat if necessary.

Most of the fighting, however, is accomplished by the ship's professional marines. Every vessel has three warriors of 9th-12th level. (There is a 15% chance for one of these to be a ranger. No paladins will sign on with Peregrin's rather neutral outfit.) In addition are a priest of 8th-10th level, a wizard of 12th-15th level (there is a 10% chance that this individual is an specialist, instead), and a thief of 10th-12th level. Peregrin does not sign on druids, for they have little use in this plane. The marines have a full complement of magical items, as appropriate for characters of their levels, all created especially for use in this plane. Details are given later in this article.

Most of the time, these heroes do nothing except stand around and look impressive. But when the vessel is threatened, whether by outside forces or unruly passengers, the heroes take care of the problem. They are ordered to use the minimum amount of force necessary to correct military problems, but outright termination of hostile beings is not uncommon (especially when dealing with passengers from the lower planes). In a dire emergency, where the encountered difficulty is almost certainly going to over-

whelm the vessel, a cry for help will be sent to Peregrin himself. This worthy will arrive in 5-10 minutes, bringing with him enough firepower to level several small cities. For these reasons, most regular passengers aboard the voidjammers are careful not to antagonize the crew.

In addition to the sailors and the marines, there are a host of officers whose job it is to actually run the vessel. These people are: the chief engineer and his assistant, a navigator and his assistant, a communications mage, a passenger director, a mate, and the captain. It is vital to note that all of the crew members aboard a voidjammer are at home on the Astral plane, being physically there (not merely *astrally projected*) and well used to its conditions. Spell-casters aboard these vessels are totally familiar with all Astral spell changes. The DM should play these NPCs as the dedicated people they are.

The most important person aboard a voidjammer is the chief engineer. The vital qualifier for this job is a powerful psionic mind, followed by great willpower (wisdom) and intelligence. In addition, the chief engineer must have another vocation as well, usually that of a spell-caster. He is cross-trained to take the place of the communications mage if necessary. The chief engineer's job is to operate, maintain, and repair the ship's engines, as well as perform maneuvers and avoiding obstacles. These tasks require an understanding of the standard engines for a voidjammer.

Due to the nature of the Astral plane, conventional means of propulsion as sails or oars are useless. Using crude kinetic energy—that is, pushing off rocks—is sometimes useful, but it is slow and impractical for any serious movement about the plane. Mental power, on the other hand, is fast and simple. It also does not apply to objects. Peregrin understood these facts when he set out to design the voidjammers, and he devised a propulsion system that could overcome the inherent hardships. He searched the planes until he found a brilliant silver metal that conducts mental energy like copper conducts electricity. He named the metal *mindex*, and it forms many of the struts and supports within the voidjammer's frame. The metal runs throughout the vessel's length, stem to stern, and can be likened to a great web. The center of that web is the engine room. Here several thick mindex cables connect the strut-web to the engines, which are two boxes each 2' in diameter and attended by all sorts of magical devices. Within the boxes are brains taken from freshly slain mind flayers. The brains are kept in nutritive baths and transported to their boxes, where magic sustains their lives. The brains are operated upon to remove the personality and will of the individual mind flayer while preserving the great psionic power and complex

psychic structures of the creature's mind.

In this state the brains are useless, lacking the will to make them do anything. Here the chief engineer comes into the picture. The chief engineer must psionically connect with the mind flayer brains, through such disciplines as *telepathic projection*, *telepathy* or *telepathic projection*, giving them direction and purpose. The mind flayer brains are used as amplifiers for the chief engineer's will, sending power to the mindex struts and causing the voidjammer to move as if it had a mind of its own. Since there are two mind flayer brains acting as one, a voidjammer has an effective movement rate of 480' per minute, or 48". This makes the ship very fast in relation to just about anything else in Astral space (with the exception of the githyanki), and it has given the voidjammers a reputation for fast service that simply cannot be matched by any other means of transport in that plane.

The brains used in each voidjammer can vary as to exact psionic strength, but the pair aboard each individual vessel must match exactly; that is, if one mind flayer brain-engine has an 18 Intelligence and 320 psionic ability points, its twin must also have an 18 Intelligence and 320 psionic ability points. Otherwise the brains will not operate in tandem and will end up tearing the vessel apart.

Originally, Peregrin tried using five or six mind flayer brains for engines, but he found that creatures of lesser mental ability than that of a mind flayer could handle only two such brains at once. He experimented with the brains of lesser psionic creatures but found that they were not able to survive outside their bodies without more support than they were worth. When he used brains from nonpsionic creatures, he found that the disciplines of *telepathy* and the like could not properly motivate the "disabled" brains into functioning. As a matter of fact, the only brains that work better than mind flayer brains are those of githyanki, but Peregrin is already on touchy ground with that race, and he did not think that taking various powerful brains from that race would help his relations with them. Rumor, however, says that the flagship of his fleet, the *Voyager*, runs with two githyanki brains as engines. These brains are able to move the huge vessel at a rate of 96", making it able to pace the fastest known creatures on the Astral plane. Since the *Voyager* never runs from a fight, there is no confirmation on whether the ship can actually move this quickly or not.

There are disadvantages to this unusual movement system. The mind flayer brains are not actually sentient, but they are alive and psionically active. Unfortunately, the personality-removal process injures the brains' psionic attacks and defenses. If the voidjammer is psionically attacked, the

chief engineer must psionically link with the brain-engines and attack and defend for them, as they will be destroyed by any attack that tears through their defenses. The brains initially have no attack strengths and only half their normal defense strengths. For example, a mind flayer brain with 300 psionic ability points has only a defense strength of 75 points. A chief engineer with a psionic ability of 200 would have 100 points of attack strength and 100 points of defense strength, added to the 75 defense points of each mind flayer brain. If psionically attacking creatures can tear through the 250 defense points of the mind flayer brains and the chief engineer, they can destroy the engines and bring the voidjammer to a halt. The mind flayer brains can take only one point of psionic damage before burning out, for they have no will of their own to stave off psychic harm.

As noted earlier, the chief engineer is responsible for maintaining the health of the mind flayer engines, since they deteriorate over a period of several centuries. He is fully conversant with the methods used to gather the brains (whether or not he agrees with these methods), the functioning of the magical devices used to keep the brains alive, and any symptoms of mental deterioration in the brains. He is familiar with the mind web and must constantly check it for damage and wear. All of these activities take tremendous energy and dedication. For this reason, these men and women are paid 5,000 gp per true month, a wage that most of them proudly tell inquiring passengers.

The chief engineer's assistant must possess the same qualities as the chief engineer but does not have nearly as much experience with the engines as his supervisor. The assistant can operate the ship in an emergency but otherwise does little.

Second in importance only to the chief engineer is the navigator, the person responsible for seeing that the ship keeps its course and makes the proper stops along its route. This task is extremely difficult, for the Astral plane has no stars to steer by and no magnetic poles to attract a compass. Navigation is much like engineering—accomplished by mental ability. The navigator is expected to memorize the location of hundreds of color pools and wormholes and be able to see wandering color pools ahead of time in order to warn the chief engineer of the danger. Navigators need a minimum of 17 intelligence to handle their jobs, as well as some training with scrying devices. Scrying is the most important part of the navigator's job. The navigator must constantly scry ahead of the vessel, searching for wandering color pools and newly formed wormholes that could send the ship into another plane or rip it apart. Special *crystal balls* in the navigation room allow the

navigator to scan for indefinite periods of time, placing the strain of viewing on the device rather than the viewer. These devices are created for Peregrin by residents of the quasi-elemental plane of Minerals and are unique to voidjammers. These *crystal balls* are enchanted to shatter if taken from their vessel, thus keeping their secrets. It is not known if any spell-caster can operate one of these devices or if special training is required.

All navigators are illusionists. Their levels vary greatly, but none are lower than 5th level because the *spectral force* spell is required of every navigator. Navigators restrict their spells to informative and miscellaneous magics, leaving combat spells to the marines. Navigators must be illusionists in order to operate and update the great three-dimensional maps that let them travel through Astral space. Each navigation room has permanent illusion-based spells showing thousands of blinking lights of many colors (for color pools) and twisting gray ropes of varying lengths (for wormholes). There are also dozens of tiny pictographic images, representing hazards along the route of the voidjammer. During normal operation this map is hidden, kept invisible by the navigation room's magics. If the vessel comes upon a new color pool, wormhole, or other feature, the navigator causes the appropriate section of the map to appear and adds the new feature. Additions are created by using a *spectral force* spell, using the audio capability to make verbal notes that automatically play when the navigator wishes to hear them (the map is enchanted so that these spells are made permanent in the navigation room). Thus, if the voidjammer encountered a githyanki castle, the navigator could open the section of the map pertaining to the ship's current position and check it for information on the castle. If the castle wanders and is not on the map, the navigator waits and see what happens, then enters its image onto the map with a verbal tag, such as "Hostile castle bearing red banners with six green stars across the top, avoid at all costs." If that ship comes upon such a castle again, it will know to avoid the castle. Deletions on the map are caused with a simple *dispel magic* spell. Navigation room maps are considered 20th-level magic for purposes of dispelling. Maps are also useful for times when the ship is off course, perhaps as a consequence of being attacked or after a psychic wind. In this case, the navigator has to fix on some familiar object on the map, then seek to guide the vessel back to that point. During these times the navigator becomes the most important person aboard the vessel, for it is up to him to avoid the many hazards of the Astral plane and save the ship.

The navigator's assistant is responsible for running messages between the naviga-

tor and the captain (such as, "There's a castle about an hour ahead") and similar legwork. He also receives tutoring in the illusory arts and the use of the navigation room maps. Learning the maps takes years of careful study, and an attentive navigator's assistant commands great respect in his own right.

Next on the hierarchy of the voidjammer is the communications mage, a mage of 11th-15th level who specializes in informative divination spells (a diviner, in AD&D 2nd Edition terminology). This person's task is to keep communications running between parts of the ship (maintaining mini-*crystal balls* set in each important room) and between the individual voidjammers. He is required to have the following spells memorized at all times: *comprehend languages*, *magic mirror*, *message*, *read magic*, *teleport*, and *tongues*. In addition, the communications mage has in his office a *crystal ball with clairaudience*, set for communication with other such *crystal balls* in the fleet. He is expected to make daily checks with the *Voyager* to report his vessel's condition and any special difficulties. If the communications mage fails to check in, Peregrin shows up in within 1-3 turns, as noted earlier in this article. The communications mage is also expected to be the ship's chief diplomat, using his language ability to talk with any beings encountered in the course of the journey. He is thus required to have a high charisma as well as an astute mind and a penchant for communication spells. The communication mage does not meet regular passengers but instead deals with unusually powerful creatures (such as various outer planar beings) that might be encountered.

The passenger director, like the communications mage, is required to have a high charisma and must either be a mage with *comprehend languages* and *tongues* or possess items that confer those abilities upon him. It is his job to greet passengers and familiarize them with the vessel's public and off-limits areas and with Peregrin's policy of noninterference, as well as to show passengers to their quarters and see to their comforts. The passenger director is the crewmember with whom travelers interact the most, as it is his job to answer passengers' questions and keep them entertained on their journey. Perhaps the most important qualification for this job is being neutral in alignment, for the passenger director must deal with passengers of all alignments and beliefs and must offend as few of them as possible. The passenger director talks freely with passengers but carefully avoids topics that give away information about Peregrin, the voidjammers, or the business of those vessels. Thus the passenger director could explain color pools and wormholes to interested passengers, but he will never

tell which planes are represented by what color pools or what wormholes lead to what planes. Doing this could lead travelers to try their own travel on the Astral plane, depriving the voidjammers of customers and income. For the same reason, these people will not describe spell distortions on the Astral plane; by keeping passengers in ignorance, the passenger directors increase the chance of having the voidjammers used repeatedly. Similarly, passenger directors do not discuss the layout of voidjammers, the make-up of their crews, crew capabilities, etc. All such a person will say about Peregrin is that he is the wizard who owns the vessels. Topics that are free for discussion include the psychic wind, the two means of Astral travel (physical and by *astral projection*), descriptions of some of the common inhabitants of the plane, various tales and legends (made up by the DM as needed), and the personal travels of the passenger director prior to taking his current post. (This is a golden opportunity for DMs to develop interesting and powerful NPCs with whom the characters may interact time and time again. After all, the voidjammer that serves the PC's world will always return, and passenger directors do not change very often.)

The mate is a fighter of 9th-12th level and is in charge of all the ship's minor functions, including scheduling, inspection of the marines, and communications

reck-ups. The mate is not required to be

a particularly dangerous foe in combat, since this is not part of his job; the requirement of being a high-level fighter insures that the person has had combat experience and can command the respect of his subordinates. A high charisma is useful for this position, and most mates have 15 + charisma scores. Passengers have many opportunities to talk to the mate, since he has duties all over the vessel. The mate is restricted from speaking on the same topics as the passenger director but can otherwise chat with passengers as much as the DM likes.

The final officer detailed here is the captain, who can be an adventurer of any class and is 12th-15th level, thus being the most experienced crewmember aboard. The captain's prime requisites are three: the ability to make clear, fast decisions; a high (15 or higher) wisdom; and an ability to work closely with people (charisma of 15 + and a strong lawful streak). His job is to oversee the other crew members and bear responsibility for everything that happens aboard his voidjammer. The captain keeps a strict log of everything that happens, insures the smooth operation of the vessel, and settles disputes between passengers and crew. The captain also makes decisions involving overall ship's operations, such as whether the vessel enters battle or flees and if the vessel will divert from its course for any reason. Although the captain's job is the least physically demanding of any aboard

(even the communications mage has to spend hours bent over *crystal balls*, mentally straining to communicate with other voidjammers), the captain is ultimately responsible for the fate of the vessel and must answer to Peregrin if things go badly. Few crewmembers feel envious of the captain's position.

Passengers have almost no opportunity to talk with the captain, since his duties keep him constantly busy. There is one exception to this, however. If the travelers appear to be particularly powerful (and they would have to be very powerful to draw attention on a voidjammer!), the captain invites them to talk with him. He displays discreet interest in the mission of the travelers, particularly if they anticipate serious trouble while on his ship. He also explains that such powerful people probably have powerful enemies and that he would appreciate not having his ship become a battleground for passengers and their foes. The captain in return reveals any interesting stories he has heard to the travelers, possibly leading to rich adventures on the Astral plane. Captains are not much for small talk as a rule, and when they do decide to talk for a long time, they are careful to avoid taboo subjects (those noted with the passenger director). The main purpose of a captain's talking with such travelers is to gauge their intentions and possibly take extraordinary precautions to safeguard the ship and its personnel while those travelers are aboard. If



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high-level characters use the voidjammer system frequently, they may become good friends with the captain of their vessel, and this could lead to some very interesting and exciting adventures. After all, captains got all that experience somewhere before they became captains of voidjammers, and they now know many people on many planes. Chances are that they know quite a few sites suited for high-level adventure, too.

### Physical construction

Each of these great ships is the size of a large merchant ship, 80' long and 25' wide. Since these ships operate on mental power, there are no oars or sails, and the upper deck is clear of rigging and other obstacles. The hull is made of hardwood and is magically reinforced to possess 50 structural points (as per the 1st Edition *DMG*, page 54). Spells and chemical treatments used upon the hull reduce fire damage to one-quarter of what is rolled, and lightning has no effect at all on a voidjammer. In addition, a powerful anti-gravity spell of Peregrin's own devising (a ninth-level spell) removes most of the vessel's mass, allowing the brains that drive the vessel to move its great bulk.

As noted under the chief engineer's description, the entire hull is laced with the rare metal mindex, culled from an asteroid belt in an alternate Prime plane known only to Peregrin and worked by friends of his on the elemental plane of Earth. This silvery metal lets the brain-engines interact with the voidjammer as if it were a living creature and adds no strength to the hull itself (mindex is actually very soft and offers poor support). Voidjammers obey the laws of flight for movement, as given on pages 50-53 of the 1st Edition *DMG*, and they are considered maneuverability class B for turns and maneuvers. A voidjammer can start and stop instantly at full speed, due to the fact that the motive power source is mental, although this may be rough on personnel if the sudden acceleration/deceleration is not expected.

Voidjammers have three decks. The upper deck is open and is used for observation. Also, the Marines spend most of their time up here, watching for trouble. There is a scorpion mounted to the front of the vessel along with its ammunition, and a heavy catapult is mounted to the rear of the upper deck. A small aft cabin holds ammunition for the catapult, both rocks and barrels of oil. The catapult sits on a rotating platform that can be turned to face in any direction. These siege weapons are useful against githyanki forts and any other hostile fortifications that might drift into the vessel's way. At the prow is a steel ram that can be used against huge creatures and any vessels that the githyanki might care to throw against the voidjammer. This weapon is detachable, allowing for a fast retreat. Because the special antigravity spell lessens the ship's

mass, rams do only half the damage stated in the 1st Edition *DMG*.

The second deck is divided in half across its middle by a heavy bulkhead and is separated by a locked door. The forward section is for crew use, and on this side are the engine room, the communications room, and the navigation room. The captain's quarters are also on this level. Attached to the captain's quarters is a special chamber designed for use if the ship's crystal ball is destroyed or malfunctioning. This is the teleport room, designed so that the captain can send himself to the *Voyager* itself if things are going badly. This tiny room will teleport only the bearer of the captain's ring (each captain has a unique ring) and has only one setting, the receiving room aboard the *Voyager*. This chamber is used only in dire emergencies and is locked most of the time.

The rear section of the second deck is the passenger's quarters. No hatches link the passenger quarters to the third deck, and only one door leads to the crew's section. This door is wizard locked (by a 20th-level magic-user), openable only by special keys carried by each officer. It is not to be used by passengers, and passengers who try to force it open are promptly expelled from the vessel. Portholes line this level, allowing crew and passengers to launch missiles and cast spells at attackers. The third deck comprises crew quarters, marines' quarters, and supply areas for the vessel. Huge cargo doors here are connected to the holds, for use by travelers with large amounts of cargo. The only other entrance into here is through the crew workrooms, and passengers caught here are thrown off the vessel, preferably through a color pool to a hostile plane. This is made very clear to all boarding passengers.

### Fees and services

Passengers boarding a voidjammer can expect a comfortable stay in plush rooms, interesting company, and a speedy trip to their destination plane. They will be protected from the Astral's hazards by a competent crew and can conserve their own energies for their destination. In addition, passengers have the benefit of being guided by experts, so they are guaranteed of ending up where they wish without having to put up with the nasty consequences of experimenting with various color pools and such. But all of these services have a price. The standard fare for using the voidjammer's services is 2,500 gp, one way, if the passenger is going to another plane serviced by the voidjammer in question; if a ship-to-ship transfer is involved, the fee rises to 3,500 gp. If that the vessel must veer totally out of its way to deliver the passenger, the fee rises to 5,000 gp.

Why would anyone bother to stay aboard a voidjammer for days when it takes only a few hours for travelers on their own to find color pools and be on

their way? Many travelers in the Astral do not have a strong idea of where they are going, other than "to an outer plane," or perhaps "to another Prime plane." If they go on their own, they can end up literally anywhere in the multiverse. When they take a voidjammer, passengers can say, "We want to go to the Nine Hells," or "We want to go to a Prime plane where magic is stronger than it is in our plane," and they will end up there, guaranteed. The voyage takes longer, but that might well be worth it to travelers with little or no experience on the Astral plane. Also, as noted above, passengers aboard a voidjammer can talk with others who have traveled the planes and may know of spell changes, interesting adventuring areas, etc. With the rules enforced aboard the voidjammer, parties of good-aligned creatures can talk to neutral and evil creatures without fearing conflict stronger than harsh words. The vessel affords an excellent opportunity to increase the passengers' knowledge of other planes and how to travel there.

### outposts

Peregrin's vessels do not rely upon random chance to pick up passengers. The wizard has set up a system to promote his method of travel and insure that word of it circulates around the worlds he serves. Every destination world served by the voidjammers has a small outpost staffed by Peregrin's people, dedicated to seeing that important sages and others "in the know" about the planes are informed that the voidjammer service is available. These stations are always located in hard-to-get-to places far from civilization to weed out the idly curious and those who violently disapprove of other-planar travel. A typical outpost consists of a single fortified building with 10-15 personnel, all experienced adventurers from that world, with one advisor who has been trained by Peregrin's staff and knows how things work on the other side of the planar curtain. These people talk with potential travelers, advising them on the fees and times involved in transit. They find out where the travelers are trying to go in order to give that information to the voidjammers ahead of time and allow a schedule to be set up in advance. For this, each outpost has a crystal *ball* on hand, specially set to communicate with the voidjammer that services that world (the device is useless for any other function). Most importantly, these people travel and spread the word that the service is available. In game terms, this means that most sages who specialize in other-planar travel will have heard of the voidjammers, as will leaders of religions that have favorable views of planar travel and many powerful mages. When characters go to find out about travel to and through other planes, they will be told that the voidjammer service is available and can decide to either use it or try such travel on their own.

From there, the characters may travel to the outpost and take ship with a voidjammer. Outposts have one other vital purpose: they give secure places for the voidjammer's crew and passengers to stop, rest, and eat. Each outpost has cooks and is heavily stocked for this purpose (see the "Ship's routine" section for details).

### Ship's routine

A voidjammer's routine seems chaotic to passengers but follows a basic pattern. At the start of each business run, the communications mage takes transmissions from the worlds served by that vessel and sees who needs to be picked up from where and what their destinations are. He gives this information to the captain, who then decides the route and gives the navigator directions for setting a course. The chief engineer is given that course and sets the vessel upon its way. As the vessel starts picking up passengers, the passenger director greets and briefs them, collects their fares, and takes them to their rooms. The ship goes on in this manner, picking up as many passengers as it can in a 12-hour "work day" and dropping passengers at their destinations. At the end of 12 hours, the vessel stops at a color pool with an outpost on its other side. Those officers and crew who are tired from their day's work (the chief engineer, navigator, communications mage, and assistants) are let off for sleep, as are spell-casting crew members who need to rest and to relearn spells. Passengers will not be let off unless this is their destination world, for Peregrin does not like passengers to see how different outposts are set up. Most of the crew remains aboard the ship, making minor repairs (the vessel constantly hits tiny chunks of matter, and these take a toll as the vessel journeys across the plane). Those persons on shore leave return early the next day, and the routine starts again. As a note, the voidjammers set their time-pieces by a 24-hour clock, as this is the system used on Peregrin's home world.

### Peregrin

Male human 24th-level mage

ARMOR CLASS: 2 (bracers of defense, AC 2)

MOVE: 12; 96 in the Astral, due to a ring of his own devising

HIT POINTS: 45

NO. OF ATTACKS: Nil

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Spell immunities from high intelligence and wisdom; unique spells

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 5% (robe of the archmage)

ALIGNMENT: Lawful neutral

PSIONIC ABILITY: 350

Attack/Defense modes: All/All

PSIONIC DISCIPLINES: Minor: cell adjustment, domination, empathy, molecular agitation, precognition; major: energy control, telepathic projection

SPELLS: As selected by the DM  
 S 10            I 20            W 19  
 D 4            C 14            CH 18

The master of this line of majestic vessels is included here for the DM to use as an NPC with whom high-level PCs might interact. Characters under 15th level should have no opportunity to meet this man, for he avoids guests and considers people under this level to be small fish who should be bettering themselves rather than pestering him. It is recommended that PCs never battle Peregrin. Rather, he can motivate characters to try daring plans of their own and can serve as an inspiration for high-level characters who wish for something unusual to do.

Peregrin the Wanderer hails from a magic-rich Prime Material plane where the ability to think meant the ability to use magic. His superior intellect and imagination allowed him to rise to a position of great power, so that by the age of 15 he ruled an empire of hundreds of thousands of inhabitants. He was challenged countless times and always won, and by age 20 he controlled a vast continent. At this point he began to see what his life held for him. Until now it had been a game to overpowering the minds of his rivals and see who could win the most in the contests of magic and will. Now Peregrin wanted to do something meaningful, and he saw little hope for it. He could continue at his current pace and rule his entire world within a decade, but what after that? Take over one world or many more? The administrative life bored the serious young man, and he did not fancy a future of court sessions, legislative tasks, and dictating the lives of millions. Instead, he handed the reins of power to less talented but more willing friends, then left for the Astral plane and its gateways to adventure.

The mage had a lot to learn. The rest of the multiverse, he discovered, enforced harsh limits on the use of magic, and he lost most of the power that had before been inborn talent. He wandered the Astral for weeks, trying to figure out color pools and seeking help in understanding this strange new universe he had entered. Unfortunately, the only creature that came along was a mind flayer looking for a bit of lunch. It instantly attacked, and Peregrine barely managed to overpower the monster (he has felt pure hatred for the race ever since). Several days after this incident, Peregrine chose a color pool leading to the plane of Concordant Opposition. He appeared in a tremendous library, in the middle of which was an ancient man who introduced himself as Thoth. There, Peregrine's reeducation began.

Now Peregrine is perhaps the most powerful human residing in the Astral plane. He lives aboard his flagship, the *Voyager*, a vessel over 150' long that boasts five decks, enjoying the company of nearly

100 other adventurers recruited from dozens of planes. The arch-mage has matured and no longer roams other planes, preferring to wander Astral space with his friends. He investigates and charts new color pools and unusual parts of the plane itself, always eager to find new worlds beyond the planar veils.

Peregrin is driven by a need to organize everything that he encounters, to pull order from chaos and tame that which is wild. He set up the voidjammer line to help travelers get from plane to plane with greater ease, feeling that it would be pointless and stupid to die on what is basically a transit plane when what one really wanted to do was get to a more interesting place. He puts tremendous energy into the navigation room of the *Voyager* and has created the largest map of the Astral plane now in existence (it is said that he regularly updates Thoth's own maps of that plane, returning the favor that deity did for him). He sets up outposts for his voidjammer line on almost every new world he discovers, adding a new ship to his line about once a century.

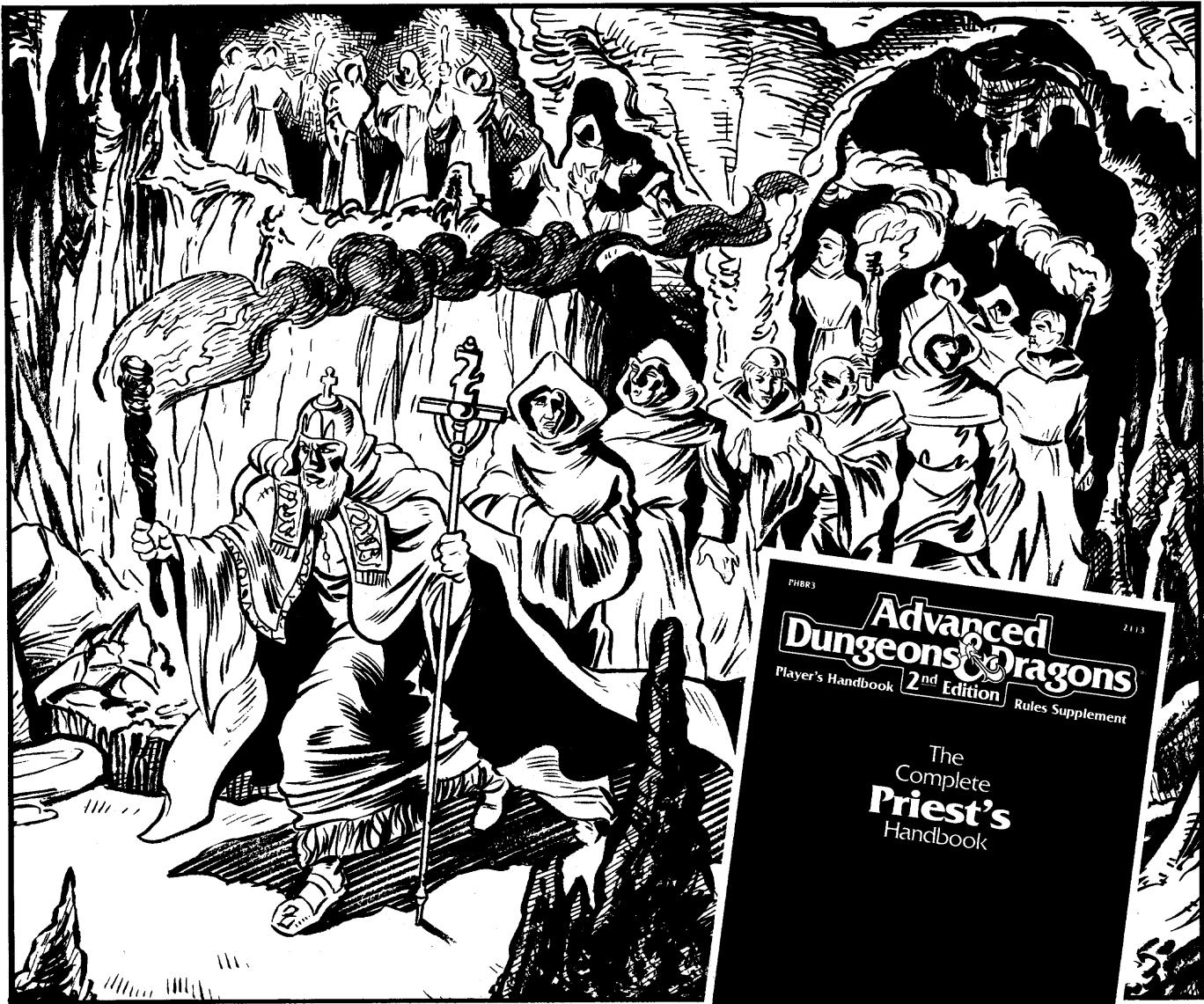
Peregrin does not fight with weapons, which is why he has no listed attacks. He never initiates combat, giving even the most vile opponents the chance to leave in peace. When he is forced to fight, however, he uses his great magics to devastating effect. His philosophy of combat is to cause losses to his enemy in excess of 100 times what they have done to him, to discourage future actions against him and his vessels. He has devastated entire githyanki fortresses for merely threatening his ships and once brought down the ceilings of several underground mind flayer cities when that race dared to attack one of his vessels.

To aid him in such instances, Peregrin keeps three items. The first is his *robe of the archmage*, created by him on gaining 18th level. The second is a *ring of wizardry* that doubles first- through third-level spells, which he took from the githyanki queen the first time they battled (rumors among the officers of his fleet say that this is why the githyanki hate Peregrin, but it is more likely that this is just one of many reasons why that race would like to see him destroyed). Finally, he has his *staff of the magi*, a gift from Thoth to help him on his quest for order. Peregrin has dozens of minor magical items, but these are the three that are with him wherever he goes.

Peregrin is an elitist, believing that those who really want to succeed will do so. He has no pity for those who fail and has no tolerance for anyone under 15th level, preferring to deal with those closer to his own caliber. He tends to be snobby toward fighter-types, believing magic to be superior to mere muscular might, but he tries to be open-minded and can get over this if

*Continued on page 101*

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Mordor, the Black Land, is the stronghold of Sauron in Middle-earth, and the plain of Gorgoroth, which lies within it, the musterings place of his armies. Most numerous of his troops are the vile Orcs, some of whom have been bred by the Dark Lord into the fearful Uruks of Mordor who stand as tall as men and do not shun the daylight. Similarly, the Black-Trolls or Olog-Hai are not hindered by the light of the Sun, and show a skill and cunning, unknown amongst their lesser brethren. Many races of Men also follow the banner of Sauron, most notably the Haradrim, a fierce warrior people from hot desert lands in the south, and the Variags, a nomadic folk from the east, whose name very name is synonymous with cruelty. The Variags are a short swarthy race, whose hardness and matchless riding skills are legendary. Most

devoted of all the dark Lord's followers, some have even been interbred with Trolls in Sauron's foul experiments to produce the hideous Pethreg or Half-trolls, whose combination of human intelligence and great strength, make them the natural commanders of the forces of Mordor.

Mightiest of all the Dark-Lord's mortal servants is the "Mouth of Sauron". Second in power only to the Witch-king, he has been designated by his Master to rule the western lands as Sauron's lieutenant, once the victory of Mordor is complete.

Last and most terrible of all the servants of the Dark-Lord are the nine Nazgul, or Ringwraiths, whose very presence causes despair in the hearts of their enemies, and whose chief is the Witch-king himself.

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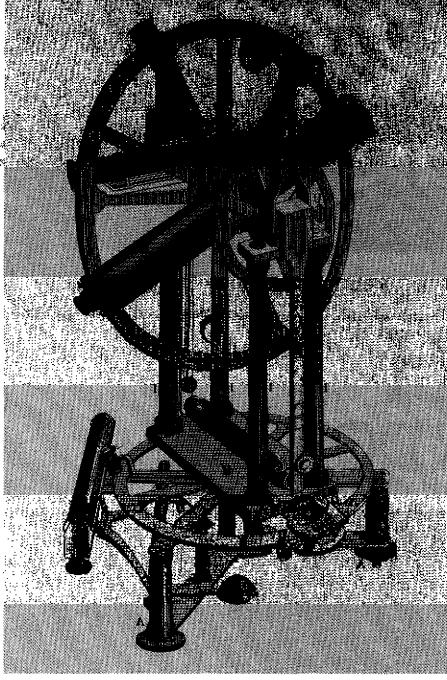
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# The Dragon's Bestiary

## The call of the wildspace

by the Arcane (a.k.a. the TSR staff)

To start at the beginning, the SPELLJAMMER™ Appendix for the AD&D® 2nd Edition *Monstrous Compendium* was written so that TSR's designers and editors could go nuts and have a really massive party. The details of how this was worked out need not concern us here; it is sufficient to say that TSR's most dedicated party animals outdid themselves and produced a volume that contains some of the most outrageous fantasy creations ever seen in any AD&D game.

The staff also created too many monsters, and a number of the beasts wound up appendix-less. We hereby present a few of the extra monsters from the darkest depths of wildspace for the amusement of all DMs and the horror of all players. Three more wildspace monsters will appear in the POLYHEDRON™ Newszine (two of those monsters by DRAGON® Magazine editors!). And if you get the SPELLJAMMER Appendix to the *Monstrous Compendium* (TSR Product No. 2109, \$9.95/£6.50), you'll get even more fun and terror. It's a jam to remember.



# Andeloid

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:

Any (as per hosts)

FREQUENCY:

Very rare

ORGANIZATION:

Solitary

ACTIVITY CYCLE:

Any (any; never sleeps)

DIET:

Parasite (as per hosts)

INTELLIGENCE:

Animal-1 (variable; as per hosts)

TREASURE:

Nil (as carried by hosts)

ALIGNMENT:

Neutral (as per dominant host)

NO. APPEARING:

1

ARMOR CLASS:

10 (AC of individual hosts)

MOVEMENT:

1 (see text)

HIT DICE:

2-24 (plus sum of hosts' Hit Dice)

THAC0:

19 or better (as per hosts' THAC0s + 1)

1 (as per hosts)

NO. OF ATTACKS:

Special (as per hosts)

DAMAGE/ATTACK:

Controls victims (as per hosts)

SPECIAL ATTACKS:

Immune to weapons, cold, and most spells; saving-throw bonuses (as per hosts)

20%

MAGIC RESISTANCE:

Spore T; ooze S (variable)

SIZE:

Fearless-20 (fanatic-M)

MORALE:

As per andeloid's Hit Dice with Hit Dice modifiers as appropriate (plus the XP value of each of the hosts); spores have no XP value

Initial statistics are for an active "ooze" (an andeloid without hosts); values in parentheses are for a composite (an andeloid with hosts).

The andeloid is a slimelike creature that forms a symbiotic link between its victims ("hosts"), joining their flesh together to form a single creature. In all the crystal spheres, few creatures are as bizarre or horrifying as these andeloid composites, chimerical meldings of individual beings.

An andeloid may be encountered in its inert state as a round crystalline spore about the size of a fist (3" across). This spore has a shimmering, shifting color and waxy texture, often being mistaken for an unusual gem (AC 0, hp 4). A spore becomes active, assuming a flat, oozelike shape 2' in diameter, once it has been exposed to at least one point of damage from heat or flame, or once it is left within 5' of a live potential host for 2d6 rounds. A spore takes no damage from fire, though an active andeloid is not so immune (see "Combat").

An andeloid without hosts is nearly mindless and has only one driving purpose—to take over a host. However, an andeloid composite is a group personality based on its component parts, directed by the most intelligent being in the composite and modified by the strongest attitudes of the other hosts and by the needs of the andeloid itself to survive and grow. A composite of several intelligent beings acts as if governed by a committee.

**Combat:** An active andeloid without a host moves slowly and lies in wait for a potential host. Anyone touched by the ooze must make a save vs. poison to avoid infestation (unconscious victims awaken if the save succeeds). A conscious victim can repel or kill the andeloid with flame or with a few spells noted later (they are immune to all other spells). Once the andeloid succeeds in infesting a victim, it bonds with the host's psyche and cannot be driven off, though it can be slain by spells or fire. A host taken over by an andeloid appears to have been covered with a 1/2"-thick translucent slime; useful tools and weapons are retained, as is clothing (though the latter becomes soaked).



When a victim is added to a composite, a limb or body part of the host is stuck as if by glue to another host. Within a month, the flesh of the two creatures merges, and the united creature (a composite) cannot be separated normally into component hosts. If the andeloid is slain before a host merges with the composite, the victim may make a System Shock roll once per round to pull free. Creatures that have been fully melded into a composite will die once the andeloid binding them dies; their bodies cannot be separated again except by using a wish or *heal*, but they may be raised normally.

An andeloid composite combines many benefits of its hosts. The number of Hit Dice and hit points of a composite equals the total of those of the andeloid and its hosts (Hit Dice are used in calculating saving throws only, not THAC0 scores). Any damage suffered is subtracted from that total and is shared by all hosts of the composite. (Note that though an andeloid is immune to many things, this is not necessarily true of its hosts.) Special immunities, resistances, and defenses of any one host are shared by all other hosts. A composite gains +4 on saves vs. poison. All of the hosts are simultaneously slain once the hit-point total of the andeloid and its hosts reaches zero. However, the andeloid itself is not slain if not attacked by fire or spells; it is instead rendered dormant for 2d8 turns, after which it re-forms into a 2 Hit Dice ooze again and must hunt for new hosts.

A composite retains its hosts' attack forms. If a host can make several attacks, it makes one less than normal if that limb has melded to the composite. A host attacks with a +1 bonus to its normal THAC0. Damage done is as normally done by each host. Special attacks must be directed by the host that possesses that ability, but these are lost if the body part with those abilities is melded with another creature in the composite. Conversely, weaknesses of component hosts are shared by the entire composite, though a natural ability or defense may cancel a weakness.

The following spells have special effects on the andeloid, in addition to any beneficial effects to hosts: *cure disease* causes 3d6 points of damage to the andeloid; *neutralize poison* causes 1d6

# Andeloid

points of damage to the andeloid; **regeneration** causes 2d10 points of damage to the andeloid and forces it to save vs. death magic or become dormant for 2d8 turns; **restoration** causes 3d6 points of damage and forces the andeloid to save vs. death magic or be destroyed. In this way hosts may be rescued from a composite.

Composites cannot fly or swim. Their land movement rates equal those of their slowest moving hosts.

An andeloid's overriding purpose is to survive and grow. An intelligent composite always attempts to capture powerful beings, if it can do so safely, in order to add them to the composite. The size of a composite is limited by the andeloid's Hit Dice. Young andeloids have only 2 Hit Dice, but gain 1 Hit Dice per three months of growth to a maximum of 24 Hit Dice. The total of all hosts' Hit Dice and levels cannot exceed that of the andeloid binding them. If a composite tries to "collect" a victim that has too many Hit Dice to be controlled, all attempts to turn that being into a host will fail.

In an effort to improve the composite, the andeloid may decide to absorb an entire host as food to provide space for an addition. This requires the decision of the controlling ego, and a period of time equal to one week per Hit Die of the host (see "Ecology"). This intentional absorption results in the melding of the absorbed personality's ego, altering the dominant ego accordingly.

**Habitat/Society:** Generally, intelligent races do not tolerate andeloids, which are sought out and destroyed as quickly as possible to prevent infestation. However, chaotic species may accept a single composite that has reached its current size limits. Some

chaotic-evil and insane races may view melding with an andeloid as tantamount to becoming a hero of legend.

Since andeloids are driven by their dominant personalities, they can be either good or evil in nature. However, because of the loathing felt for andeloids by many races, there is a greater tendency for them to be savage monsters instead of benign, helpful colonies. Due to this lack of acceptance, composites tend to inhabit remote regions or follow nomadic lives traveling wildspace (if one host of a composite has spelljamming powers) and crystal spheres, staying in no place for long. Any treasure found is converted to easily carried items or cached on remote asteroids or moons.

**Ecology:** As long as its hosts are able to feed, the andeloid draws sustenance from its hosts' feeding. An andeloid may survive without food for a week, converting its hosts' stores of fat into energy to provide its hosts's needs. After a week of such deprivation, the parasite must begin to convert its hosts' Hit Dice into food at the rate of 1 Hit Dice per week, starting with the Hit Dice of its weakest host. As the Hit Dice are absorbed, the body of the host losing the Hit Dice is absorbed and eliminated from the composite.

After the andeloid is forced to consume all of its available hosts' Hit Dice, it becomes dormant a week later, forming spores that can survive for *eons* without air or sustenance. As many such spores are created as the andeloid itself has Hit Dice.

Andeloids do not reproduce other than by creating spores. An andeloid newly created from a spore has no memories of any previous existence.



# Infernites

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Fire-based worlds, volcanic vents, dim solid stars
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Kiln or subject citizens
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Molten rock or metal, and flammable items
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (8-10)
TREASURE:	Y (x 3), V (armor and weapons only)
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful neutral
NO. APPEARING:	10-100
ARMOR CLASS:	3
MOVEMENT:	9
HIT DICE:	4+3
THAC0:	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1 or 2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	By weapon type (see text), or 2-8/2-8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Bear-hug flame damage, magma missiles, fireteam advantages, spells possible
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Regeneration
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6' tall)
MORALE:	Elite (14)
XP VALUE:	650 (more for magicians and leaders as appropriate)

Infernites are a race of intelligent humanoids inhabiting many known fire-based worlds. They are fire-based themselves, and some are proficient in the use of magic and spelljamming craft. Infernites are the same size as humans, more powerful but of comparable intelligence. Socially, they are more rigid, structured, and single-minded of purpose than any humans.

**Combat:** To an earth-based creature, a single infernite is a formidable opponent. It is of great power and skill, and its hot, flaming body can roast most creatures. If that were not bad enough, infernites rarely engage in combat in groups of less than five, all of them being highly trained soldiers accustomed to close combat, missile fire, and military discipline. Such a military group is known as a *kiln*.

An infernite can also throw off chunks of molten rock and metal from its own body, each missile causing 2d4 points of damage at a range equal to that of a thrown dagger (1/2/3); two such missiles can be hurled per round. However, each time an infernite throws a chunk of itself as a missile weapon, it loses 1 hit point. "Magma throwers" will no longer use their inherent missile weapons once they fall to 10 hit points or below.

Infernite weapons are the same as those commonly found on earth-based worlds (except that the metals won't melt). Most individuals have swords that cause 1d8 points of damage plus 2d6 points of additional flame damage. The members of a kiln are armed with other weapons, as noted later.

Also, the intense heat of infernite bodies does 2d6 points of damage per round to creatures in physical contact with them. Realizing this, infernites are known to engage in bear-hugs to kill their foes (to-hit roll at +2 required, which can be broken by victim if a roll to open doors is made, once per round).

Cold is especially effective against infernites, doing double the normal damage. Even in temperatures that humans consider comfortable (up to the boiling point of water), infernites suffer 1d3 points of damage per round. Water causes 1d10 points of damage per gallon poured onto an infernite.

One infernite in six is a magician, able to cast spells as a mage of



level 1-10. Ironically, infernite magicians are well versed in the use of cold spells; until they reached wildspace, infernites fought only each other. Typical spells include affect *normal fires*, *chill touch*, *chilling hands* (the cold version of *burning hands*), *ice storm*, *wall of ice*, and *cone of cold*. All infernite magicians have an inherent ability to create *improved phantasmal force* once per day (at their mage level of ability) in addition to all other powers.

A group of infernites, whether on the ground or in wildspace, will be organized into kilns of five infernites each. Kilns are typically organized in one of these four fashions:

**Pike team:** Four armed with pikes (1d6 +2d6 points of fire damage) and one magma thrower.

**Close combat team:** Two armed with swords, two magma throwers, and one magician.

**Magical team:** Three magicians, one magma thrower, and one using a sword.

**Missile team:** Four magma throwers and one charged with resupply.

The pike team is often used in large battles; a few hundred such teams are organized into a phalanx. Close-combat teams and magical teams are more frequently used in piracy and boarding actions. The missile team is a support team designed to enhance any combat situation, the resupplier carrying additional material to replenish the other members (see "Ecology").

When in their formations, teams provide both a +1 to hit for each member and a -1 to their Armor Classes. A team loses these benefits if it is reduced to three or fewer members.

Infernites are able to manipulate their fluid bodies to flow through cracks and around obstacles. They can pass through any cracks or holes that are at least 6" across at their normal movement rate. Also, when body material such as hot coals or lava presents itself, infernites have the ability to bond with it and regenerate 1 hit point every other round given no interruptions (see "Ecology").

**Habitat/Society:** Fire-based worlds are difficult for earth-based creatures to imagine. Physically, such a world offers many of the

# Infernite

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same challenges to its inhabitants. For instance, there is *no* need for infernites to wear clothing or construct buildings to protect them from the elements on their worlds, and they make no territorial claims because of the flowing of their molten lands. Whereas human culture grew diverse in relatively static environments, infernite cultures developed very unyielding structures on turbulent, everchanging worlds.

Infernite communities contain 10-100 individuals. One leader is in addition to this number and has maximum hit points, maximum wizard abilities, and the ability to cast a *plane shift* spell once per day, taking up to 50 infernites in physical contact with it. Spelljammer crews have the normal number of crew, with the ships' captains being leaders and all crew being organized into kilns.

The individual infernite has very little freedom of choice, nor does it expect any. The offspring of each parent take on that parent's role in society, be it soldier, leader, administrator, or worker. Leaders enjoy the absolute confidence of those under them. Once working for a particular leader, an infernite is bound to that leader for life; when that leader dies, its subjects cease taking on nourishment and quickly perish as well. Interestingly, infernite leaders nearly always disagree on some point of policy, leading to ferocious battles between their followers until one leader and all his followers die—a frequent occurrence that limits their otherwise fast-growing population.

Infernite leaders and mages have spelljamming capabilities, and leaders sometimes order large metallic spelljamming vessels to be built. The metal of the hulls is forged to withstand the great temperatures generated both within and without. To a human, the outside of an infernite ship is as hot as a cookstove, and its interior like a volcano's core (ships in this state are hereafter referred to as "hot," though infernite crews often complain because their ships are kept too "cold"). A ship has a single leader; if that leader is lost, the ship is left to cool in the icy cold of space. Originally, infernite spelljammer ships used the same designs as were used for ships that sailed their molten seas, but they have since adopted common for their spelljamming vessels. Use common ship statistics for their vessels; all statistics apply except "save as" which should be thin metal. Infernite spelljamming ships cause an additional 1d3 points of hull damage when ramming, from their intense heat, and will automatically set ablaze any wooden ship or rigging it comes in contact with. The q'nidar (from MC7) are a race of creatures despised and hunted by the infernites.

When a leader divides (see "Ecology"), it divides its subjects between its offspring. By whatever agreement, one leader then leaves with its subjects, more often than not to travel to another world by spelljamming ships or *plane shift*. Infernites have colonized many known fire-based worlds by traveling through interplanar gates opened by their leaders, since they cannot cross the Phlogiston (see "Ecology"). They also enjoy such places as volcanic vents, world cores, hot gaseous worlds, and dim red stars.

When encountered, infernites rarely do business with creatures from earth-based worlds. Their pirates often raid in search of hardened metals or magical items that can withstand the heat of their bases. They defend what is theirs tenaciously.

Infernites do not venture into the Phlogiston, as the heat from their ships is magnified and the infernites "burn out." A "hot" infernite ship that enters the Flow causes a 100'-radius explosion for 30d6 points of damage to non-fire-based beings (see page 10 of the *Concordance of Arcane Space* in the SPELLJAMMER™ boxed set). Infernites themselves must save vs. death magic at -4 each round they are in the Flow, or die.

**Ecology:** Infernites are beings of molten metal and rock, somewhat akin to fire elementals. Their bodies are rather fluid but maintain a humanoid appearance virtually all the time. There is only one sex; reproduction is accomplished through a long process of fission. Each infernite divides itself in a week-long ritual once every four months. However, reproduction can be highly accelerated when the community, be it a world, colony, or starship crew, is either threatened or is preparing for war. In such an instance, the community consciousness naturally takes over, forcing individuals to seek out sources of body material and begin reproducing once per day. Since leaders divide their power when they divide, they will try to avoid reproduction indefinitely. Body material is drawn from the surface of a dim star, the volcanoes of an earth-based world, the surface of a fire-based world, or from huge kilns stoked by the infernites themselves. The infernites literally become one with the new body material and force themselves to divide more often. This process can continue as long as there is still a perceived threat to the community or until the body material runs out. In a short time, the infernites can create whole armies to perpetuate their race and their ambitions.

In a similar process, infernites can heal damage done to themselves. If there is a source of body material at hand, they can heal one point of damage every other round by bonding with it. For instance, in a missile fire team, the missile users stick their hands into a vat of molten material to gain back hit points and continue firing. Fighting infernites on their own worlds is always a costly venture.

On their own worlds, infernites tend to eat just about everything. On earth-based worlds they can eat anything that normally burns: wood, coal, oil, etc., but eating "cold" food brings their body temperatures down gradually—those that have been forced to live on earth-based worlds for extended periods of time eventually cool down and die. Water-based worlds are shunned by infernites, and air-based worlds exhaust their fuel quickly, burning them out.



# Metagolem

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:

Any

FREQUENCY:

Very rare

ORGANIZATION:

Solitary

ACTIVITY CYCLE:

Any

DIET:

Electricity

INTELLIGENCE:

Very (12)

TREASURE:

Varies

ALIGNMENT:

Any

NO. APPEARING:

1 (5% of 2-5)

ARMOR CLASS:

6 to -2

MOVEMENT:

3 to 15

HIT DICE:

9 (40 hit points)

THAC0:

3

NO. OF ATTACKS:

1

DAMAGE/ATTACK:

1d10 to 9d10

SPECIAL ATTACKS:

Magical spells

SPECIAL DEFENSES:

Immune to electricity

MAGIC RESISTANCE:

Nil

SIZE:

S to M (3-6' tall)

MORALE:

Fearless (20)

XP VALUE:

12,000 to 16,000

Metagolems are hollow metallic constructs that have been given magical life; they resemble humanlike beings such as humans, elves, dwarves, and gnomes. There are as many varieties of metagolems as there are metals, ranging from those made of copper to those made of platinum alloys. Like normal golems, metagolems are animated by elemental spirits. However, they are also given considerable intelligence and can speak. Metagolems have no free will, though, and always strive to fulfill the wishes of their creators. The methods of creating metagolems are not widely known, but only wizards of 18th level and above can make them. A metagolem has the alignment of its creator and an equivalent Strength of 15 for purposes of carrying and lifting items.

Generally speaking, the more exotic the metal, the better the metagolem's armor and speed. Statistics for metagolems made of common metals are given below:

Metal	AC	SJL *	Movement	Damage
Copper	6	1	3	1d10
Tin	5	1	4	2d10
Bronze	4	2	5	3d10
Iron	3	2	6	4d10
Steel	2	3	7	5d10
Silver	1	3	8	6d10
Electrum	0	4	9	7d10
Gold	-1	4	10	8d10
Platinum	-2	5	11	9d10

\* Spelljammer levels, for use with major or minor helms.

**Combat:** Metagolems are quite intelligent and employ sound tactics in battle. Aside from their limited selection of spells, they never use weapons, preferring to rely on their fists instead. Although quite intelligent, they are completely emotionless and can never be swayed from their goals.

Metagolems can cast *magic missile*, *web*, *fly*, *flaming sphere*, *fireball*, and *stinking cloud* spells once each per day at the 10th level of ability. They are immune to all Illusion/Phantasm, Enchantment/Charm, and Alteration wizards' spells, and to all spells in the Charm sphere of priest magic. They are not damaged by any attack involving electricity (such as a *lightning bolt* spell), instead gaining energy from such attacks (see "Ecology").

**Habitat/Society:** Metagolems are magical automatons created by powerful wizards to accomplish certain goals, such as protecting



or flying a spelljammer ship, chasing down hated enemies, collecting treasure, and so forth. They have no society as such, but they do seem to bear a strange fondness for others of their kind. Occasionally, several metagolems can be found relaxing together on worlds particularly prone to violent lightning storms.

Often, a metagolem will join a party of adventurers if it is clear that doing so will prove beneficial to accomplishing its master's goal. Although a metagolem makes a surprisingly amiable companion, it is usually mistrusted, for its companions never know when the metagolem's true instructions will interfere with the group's plans. There have even been reports of metagolems joining spelljammer crews, then leading mutinies for the purpose of accomplishing their secret goals.

**Ecology:** As with other golems, metagolems can be created only by powerful wizards. However, unlike regular golems, metagolems occasionally require a supply of energy—in the form of electricity—in order to continue functioning. Hungry metagolems are known to insult powerful wizards for the sole purpose of making the mages so angry that they cast *lightning bolts* at the metagolems. Every hit point of damage from electricity powers a metagolem for one week, to a maximum charge of 100 weeks of continuous operation. Without this power, metagolems become dormant until given a new charge.



# FORUM



"Forum" welcomes your comments and opinions on role-playing games. In the United States and Canada, write to: Forum, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147 U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Forum, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We ask that material submitted to "Forum" be either neatly written by hand or typed with a fresh ribbon and clean keys so we can read and understand your comments.

In issue #146, the editorial talked about computer RPGs. I personally agree with just about all of the points hit by Roger Moore. However, in issue #151, on page 66, Alan Grimes wrote a letter that I did not agree with at all.

Mr. Grimes states that there is no role involved in a binary program. Of course there isn't! The role involved is through characters created by the binary program. Let me give an example.

I have owned an IBM clone computer for almost three years. The first program bought by my family for me was *The Bard's Tale*. In *The Bard's Tale*, I created a character, a paladin, named Baxian. Baxian and his gang of other characters have been my alternate personas, as Mr. Grimes puts it. Baxian has been my number-one character even through *The Bard's Tale II*. He and I have been through countless battles, just like some fighters in an AD&D campaign. The interaction that Mr. Grimes fails to see is there. The computer is just the channel that the player uses to play the game, just as a DM is also a channel for an AD&D game.

Mr. Grimes states that the essence of spontaneity is not included in a computer RPG, that everything the computer does is by a program that is given and known. The program is given, but not known (at least in the IBM version). The programs are normally written in some assembly language that only someone who can read that assembly language understands. How can you know how to solve the game or know what the game will be like if you can't read the program language?

Next, Mr. Grimes mentions the fact that gamers who really enjoy the game will find time to play. Where I have lived, few people will take the time to play a good D&D® game. I have been interested in D&D and AD&D games for about six years. In all that time, I have played just a few complete adventures. All I have to do is turn to my computer, and I have something that already has an adventure for me to play, or I can continue an adventure that I stopped to eat dinner, or whatever. You can't tell your gaming friends to pack out to the porch and wait while you and your family eat dinner can you?

Mr. Grimes says that he did some quick calculating to figure out how many Ks of memory would be needed to have just three books worth of AD&D manuals on disk. This calculating may be correct, but Mr. Grimes left out the element of data compression. By compressing the data, those 37 disks could be compressed into just five or six disks. An example: SSI's *Pool of Radiance* program needs at least 384K of RAM memory to operate; the program would have come on about 15 disks, but because of the compression, it came on three. The them-

compressed five or six disks of manuals would be easily used by any computer user.

Regarding the removal of the GM: In the groups I've played in, most of the players didn't want to be the GM, and a game wouldn't get going. A computer will be the GM for you, and a game can start right away without having to wait for an adventure to be created.

In closing, computers are going to be part of this world, whether you like it or not. Plenty of imagination can be used while playing a good computer RPG. Computers don't need imagination, but the programs they interpret give it to you in the face.

Dan Howarth  
Holbrook AZ

According to the AD&D 2nd Edition *Players Handbook*, any PC who becomes "undead" is automatically an NPC! His goals and ambitions are utterly opposed to those he held before." This statement disregards the character who, because of a desire to further his magical powers, chooses to become a lich. The *Monstrous Compendium* says that liches "have cast aside their places as living beings by choice." One can't justify removing the PC status from a character who chooses to become undead. Liches are described as undead who "seek to further their own power at all costs." From this, one can conclude that liches, contrary to the statement in the *Player's Handbook*, retain their goals and ambitions after entering the state of undeath. The lich's choice to become undead, seclude himself from society, and search "for power in strange planes unknown to even the wisest of sages" can eliminate any fears of losing the delicate balance of power in the game and provide some adventures for the higher-level characters.

Spectres, wights, and wraiths—all powerful forms of undead—do have the power to drain creatures' energy. If a character is killed by a spectre, wight, or wraith using its *energy drain*, then he is doomed to become one of the creatures that killed him. The new undead is now under the control of the monster or its master. If that was the end of the character, then one could see why the PC would have to become an NPC. But that is not the case. The *Monstrous Compendium* explains that "once a character becomes a spectre, recovery is nearly impossible, requiring a special quest." How can somebody complete a quest when he is an NPC? Is the DM to say, "Okay, your character's master was slain, and he has completed his special quest, sustaining only minor injuries; he is now back under your control"? That does not seem to be in the spirit of the game.

While there are obvious cases where PCs who become undead must be taken by the Dungeon Master, not all cases should be treated as such.

Erik Martella  
Salinas CA

Very often when playing RPGs, a player finds himself in a situation where he has to choose between playing his character as he believes the character would act, or doing what the player's own common sense tells him to do. The purist school of thought would have the player role-play no matter what the consequences. Most

players, though, would agree that there should be limits.

Here's an example from a game I recently played at a convention in my region. At one point, one of the players reached a situation where her character, who was rather impetuous, was likely to do something that she as a player knew would be rather risky. She very rightly did as her character would and had to suffer the consequences. Fortunately, all was made right, and she was not eliminated from the game because of her character's rash action.

As the game progressed, one of the players suggested a way for my character to accomplish our goal immediately. This could have accomplished only one of two things. Either it would have ended the game before any of the players (including myself) wanted it to end, or it would have put us into a bad situation for which we were not yet prepared. Even though it would have been something my character might have done, I did not do it and I feel I made the correct decision.

Perhaps the most ill-advised example that I ever saw of someone role-playing his character when he should not have happened several years ago, when a player whose character was an outlaw of evil alignment had his PC kill the rest of the party and make off with all of the loot. The fact that his character was an evil outlaw was not an acceptable explanation, for even an evil character will find that he must cooperate with those around him in order to survive. This character found a heavy bounty had been placed on his head, and his player found that the rest of the regular players resented his actions—including those of us who were not playing that night—and he soon left the group.

To sum it all up, a player should role-play his character the best way that he can, except when that role-playing acts to the deterrence of the other players' completion of and enjoyment of the game.

John Patrick Wall  
Palatine IL

My own linguistic gripe with the AD&D game is the incredible list of pole arms in the [1st Edition] *Players Handbook*, most of which are only to be distinguished by which way the hook on the end points, while beer is given one entry under "ale." Nowhere have I seen an article on the rich variety of beers, wines, and spirits that existed in medieval times. There isn't even a difference between fish, flesh, and fruit in the food listings. Weaponry, on the other hand, is listed at encyclopedic length—hardly a situation likely to discourage hack-and-grab playing! It almost gives the impression that the AD&D game is essentially for connoisseurs of obsolete arms. The presumably "realistic" distinction between bill, guisarme, bill-guisarme, halberd, and holy water sprinkler, with no guidelines or pictures given, only confuses simple folk like myself.

A little effort to make players think about what their characters are actually eating when they open up their "standard rations" might add more realism to the game (famous last words: "Are you *sure* beef is supposed to be this dark?") My point: Conan and King Arthur were

bothered about the quality of their pint, as was the legendary brewer-king Gambrinus.

Paul Arblaster  
Leuven, Belgium

This letter is in response to Ahmed Amin's of issue #155. I firmly believe that players should be given the opportunity to have their character's raised from the dead. The key word is opportunity. I am not saying that a character is raised every time he dies. That mentality is what's responsible for such horrors as 25th-level PCs with armor classes of -12 and +10 *luck blades*. What I am saying is this: Give your players a chance. Dying can be a very valuable lesson and often a spiritual experience, allowing for more intense role-playing.

First of all, it is important that players (and their characters) understand and accept the PCs' own mortality. No PC is going to live forever. Just as in the real world, not everyone in a game world believes death is permanent, and near-death experiences can be quite common. The "dead" have been brought back to "life" all over the world today and while to us this is a result of technology, it is a result of magic in the fantasy realm. *Raise dead* and *resurrection* are both high-level spells. Would you deny these spells to your PCs when they reach the appropriate level? If not, then doesn't it stand to reason that there are NPC priests out there capable of these spells?

The best way to handle it is to deal with each case individually. When I am faced with it, I ask myself a series of questions. For instance: Is the character presently on a quest or mission of a religious nature? This includes missions for other deities or their temples, if it benefits a fellow party member's religion. (This assumes the word "voluntarily.") Has he completed any such tasks for his church in the past? Is he a devout follower? If he's a cleric, has he been a good one-spreading the word, making necessary sacrifices, etc.? "Yes" answers to any of these questions deserve special considerations for the PC. In the case of fighters, consider this: A fighter who did not die in battle or a paladin/cavalier who did not die honorably may never be "at rest" and could merit a second or even third chance. Exactly how did the PC die? If it was a truly stupid, foolhardy action on his part, permanent death may be a far more valuable lesson. If, however, he was tricked into drinking poison by a cunning 8th-level assassin losing that point of constitution may be lesson enough.

Now consider the dead PC's god. If he was a worshiper of Athena, he may already be in Hades, and if so, he probably won't be coming back (just ask Persephone). A follower of Thor who was above 4th level may already be in Asgard training for Ragnarok. Still unsure? How about a meeting:

Zeus: "Jared of Almar, I understand you wish to return to your plane. Why?"

Jared: "I was having fun! Olympus is a drag."

Jared will be hailing Charon's cab any minute now. However, if you replace Zeus with Dionysus, Jared may be home in time for happy hour.

If you decide to allow the resurrection, make sure it wasn't free. Require a sacrifice of money, a magical item, or services. For high-level PCs, how about donating a piece of land and financing a new temple? Or how about finding a long-lost religious artifact or defeating an evil cult?

Finally, as we all like to remind each other, the ultimate decision is yours. After all, it may be time for a new character, especially in the case of alignment violators or players who just don't understand their characters' classes fully. You can always put limitations on your *resurrecting*

rules. A good friend of mine never raises PCs who were below 5th level

When I asked my players how they'd feel if I said there'd be no more raising from the dead—well, let's just say I've DMed red dragons that were less hostile. Give it a try. A wise DM knows when resurrection is appropriate and will gain his player's respect. They may even (egad!) thank you for it!

Maribeth Hass  
Greenfield WI

Have you ever felt degraded by others for playing the D&D game? Did you identify with Shawn DeMers in issue #132 or Michael Drake in issue #146? There seems to be a lot of people who think that the D&D game is in some way harmful. It also seems that the vast majority of them have never played or have even seen a gaming session and therefore will never know the benefits of gaming.

Gamers and nongamers may not be aware of the benefits of gaming. There is more than just entertainment going on here. When you gather for a gaming session, you find companionship with fellow gamers. Even if you don't notice it, you are being accepted and validated as a human being. This may not seem like a big deal, but think about it: What would it be like not to be recognized as a human being? The gaming session is, in its own way, related to support groups. Gamers can talk to others about problems and get feedback on their lives. It is an escape, just like reading a romance or adventure novel, only while gaming you are creating the adventure. Gaming also exercises your math skills and your cognitive processes.

As a gamer (and human being), you are used to facing difficult situations, be it passing an important test or facing a war clan of orcs. Facing others who think of the D&D game as some weird, childish game is a little different but no less difficult. To be better armed against these people, it is suggested that you research the history of your game and ask those who attack you to sit in and observe what really goes on at a gaming session.

David Raymond Gawarecki  
Winona MN

I am writing in response to Robert Morrison's letter in issue #151's "Forum" concerning weapon specialization. Mr. Morrison states that weapon specialization unbalances play at higher levels, and that characters naturally become more proficient with weapons.

Weapon specialization is the exclusive use of one weapon and the devotion of one's life to the use of that weapon. The bonuses given to a specialized character are a result of the character's intensive study and practice of that weapon. He has achieved a greater understanding of that weapon than most other characters ever could.

During that character's life, he is assumed to practice daily with that weapon. When a character advances in level, all that practice and training is assumed to have finally made a change significant enough to warrant an increase in his bonuses.

Other classes can also become more proficient with a weapon. Although they cannot become as skilled with a weapon as a specialized fighter, their advances are taken into account by lowering that character's THAC0 score.

I've looked at the D&D game's weapon-mastery system and feel that it is grossly unbalanced. It allows any character to become as skilled in the use of a weapon as a fighter, which makes the latter class lose much of its appeal. It

is ludicrous to assume that a mage or a thief can become as proficient in a weapon as a class whose very basis is fighting.

Brian Hicks  
Redlands CA

Per the "Forum" letter of James R. Collier in issue #152: My (now-defunct) campaign worlds were set in various technological stages depending on governmental pressures, availability of magic to accomplish the same ends, and the differing socio-religious viewpoints on inventiveness. Areas such as Englene, with a repressive empress and high population of state-backed wizards, kept their technology at Middle Ages level (c. A.D. 900-1200), though some oddly anachronistic things would appear in the dock areas. At the other end of the scale, the city of Triask was positively Renaissance because of its encouragement of invention. The rest of the main world fell into various stages between. Magic does not have to preclude technology, as one imagines even powerful wizards may like an alternative to going out to the wardrobe on a cold night.

My campaign also included high-level conjurers who were "dimension fishers," bringing in odd items from other Prime Material planes in search of riches or knowledge. You could have a telephone appear in your wizard's conjuring circle, but even if you know how to use it, you wouldn't necessarily understand the principles of its operation. Your wizard certainly isn't going to be able to create a telecommunications network with one phone. On the other hand, the basic principles of the butane lighter might be understandable to a patient wizard (some primitive lamps had the same basic principle), but that same wizard isn't going to be able to manufacture those devices.

Finally, your mage may conjure a silk scarf out of thin air—but did she create it? This is a decision for DMs to make individually, but I've always ruled that "created" items were taken from elsewhere. There's always room for diversification. The use of bread-mold poultices in the Middle Ages was based on superstition and it lasted until Pasteur came along.

Guns are something any wizard group that intends to survive is going to oppose; as the saying goes, guns are the great equalizer. The most noble paladin or practiced mage can be shot down by a near-sighted granny. In fact, my campaign worlds had crossover characters from Earth who started an antigun movement because guns lead to the sort of progression of nastiness that results in nuclear weapons. The thought of some drow terrorists with nuclear weapons should be enough to derail that progression. However, technological progression isn't all interrelated and could go off in quite different directions in a world that has magic.

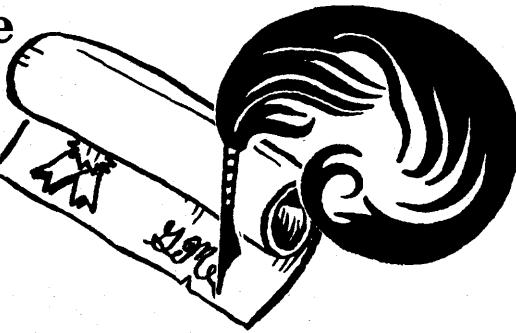
The above really doesn't matter too much in any case. With the AD&D 2nd Edition and SPELLJAMMER rules, such normally interrelated fields as biochemistry and physics have been repealed. It now becomes questionable if your "human" character has cell differentiation, so it would be entirely possible that steam cannot be used to create pressure (no steam engines, whistling tea kettles, or—since hot gases don't expand—hot air balloons). Even technology as simple as windmills may fail to function, due to campaign variances in friction and inertia. Technology and science involve more decisions for the individual DM.

Gregg Sharp  
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# SAGE ADVICE

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LD, United Kingdom. We are no longer able to make personal replies; please send no SASEs with your questions (old SASEs are being returned with the writers' guidelines for the magazine enclosed).

Once again, the sage tours the AD&D® 2nd Edition game, with some scenic stops in unusual areas. DMG is the 2nd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

**The description of the troll in the *Monstrous Compendium* says that any hit with a "natural" 20 severs a limb. Does this apply to attacks against other creatures? If not, why does the game have the seventh-level priest spell *regenerate*?**

Trolls are thin and rubbery, and are prone to being hacked apart, although hacking apart a troll doesn't do much good. Unless the DM creates his own critical-hit system, it's not possible to hack limbs off other creatures in combat. However, *swords of sharpness*, monsters such as green slime, crude forms of medieval justice, and many other hazards in the game can lead to the loss of limbs—hence the *regenerate* spell.

**The *Monstrous Compendium*, Volume One lists statistics for greater rakshasas, but gives no experience-point values for them.**

Greater rakshasas are the Rhuks, Rajahs, and Maharajahs.

**One of my players wants to run an ultimist character from POLYHEDRON™ Newszine issue #23. This is a powerful class. Is it intended for PC use or just for NPCs?**

Neither. The ultimist is a piece of satire. In this case, the mockery is directed at players who insist on having characters who can do anything and everything. Try not to laugh too hard if you player asks about playing an ultimist again.

**When can we expect to see rules for psionics in the AD&D 2nd Edition game?**

A handbook on psionics is tentatively scheduled for release in early 1991. Stay tuned for further developments.

**How much does it cost to build a castle, tower, or other fortification?**

**I couldn't find this information in the DMG.**

This information is presented in DMGR2 *The Castle Guide* (TSR Product #2114), available now.

**Can a spellfire wielder (from FR7 *Hall of Heroes*, pages 49-50) ever return to his original class? Can a spellfire wielder absorb clerical spell energy? If so, is this voluntary or involuntary? What happens to spellfire wielders who absorb more energy than their limit? How do you determine if a character can have spellfire ability?**

A character with *spellfire* powers never actually leaves his original class. However, to gain experience in his original class, the character must refrain from using any *spellfire* abilities during an adventure. If the character does use a *spellfire* ability, all experience earned during that adventure goes toward the character's *spellfire* level, except for individual experience awards for the character's original class (see the *DMG*, page 48), which are lost.

*Spellfire* wielders can absorb magical energy from almost any source: spells of all types, breath weapons, gaze attacks, and just about anything else. At the 1st level of *spellfire* ability, absorption is involuntary; the character drains any magic with which he comes in contact, including useful magical items and healing spells (only rest or nonmagical healing can heal damage to the character). Absorption is strictly voluntary at 2nd level and above.

Exactly what happens if the character exceeds his limit is unrevealed. I suggest that either the character becomes unable to absorb more energy once he reaches the limit and consequently is affected normally by any magic with which he comes in contact while "full," or he absorbs the excess and automatically releases one level of energy each segment (10 times per round), suffering 1-6 hp damage each time, until his total energy falls back into the "10 x constitution" category.

*Spellfire* is a variant type of magic created by Ed Greenwood in his novel of the same name. Only the DM can decide if a particular character can have the ability. It seems likely that only one *spellfire* wielder can be alive at a time on any given world, and that the ability is hereditary.

**Why can't halflings be rangers? Halflings can be clerics, and rangers have a few clerical spells. Why can't gnomes be bards? Gnomes are known for their sense of humor and should have access to some kind of jester-type abilities. Why can't [my**

**favorite race] become [my favorite class], since [several dozen good reasons why this race/class combination is justified exist]?**

Game logic and game balance require that demihumans have limited character-class options. According to game logic, halflings don't become rangers because they aren't inclined to be. Halflings who really like the outdoors and nature become druids. Halflings who are nimble and good at hiding become thieves; that's just the way halflings are. Gnomes who feel roguish become thieves themselves. Those who tend toward flashy expositions become illusionists. (Illusionists, by the way, have an almost infinite capacity for vivid storytelling and practical jokes, as even a quick look at the spells in the illusion/phantasm spell school will show.)

Only humans have the ability to become any class they want to be (ability scores permitting), and they can advance all the way to level 20. That's what makes humans unique. Demihumans have completely different psychological, physical, and spiritual makeups from humans; that's what makes each demihuman race unique. Overall, demihumans are not nearly so versatile or adaptable as are humans, because all have special skills and limitations derived from their heredity and culture that simply close some doors to them when they seek professions. Game balance requires that each race in the game be equally playable. If demihumans—with their infravision, special resistances, and special abilities—could freely choose from every character class in the game, there wouldn't be much reason to play a human character. As I've said before, the D&D® and AD&D games are games of choices; to get something, you've got to give up something else. Good players make the right choices most of the time and know how to capitalize on their characters' strengths while finding ways to circumvent their weaknesses. While changing the rules to eliminate character weaknesses is *one* way to circumvent them, it isn't a clever or heroic one.



# To the Ends of the

Earth isn't the only world that needs heroes

by David Edward Martin

Role-playing in the MARVEL SUPER HEROESTM game is not restricted to having your heroes battle evil on Earth. Many of the greatest triumphs of the Avengers, the Fantastic Four, and the X-Men have occurred in outer space. Why not take your campaign to the stars, too?

But before you can go adventuring into the far-flung reaches of the universe, you first need a way to get there. A variety of means to reach the stars exists, from personal flight using superpowers to the use of external or mechanical means. Some examples of spacefaring methods include:

*Slower Than Light (STL) drives:* STL ships can reach speeds up to that of light. If such a ship is intended for interstellar flight, it may be equipped with suspended animation chambers or a life-support system capable of sustaining passengers for years or centuries.

*Faster Than Light (FTL) drives:* FTL ships are capable of exceeding lightspeed, but they still travel in "realspace."

*Advanced FTL drives:* Better engines enable advanced FTL starships to attain speeds 10 times faster than normal FTL drives.

*Warpdrive:* Warpdrive ships are capable of entering hyperspace and thus attaining FTL speed. Warpdrive ships might be limited to STL flight in normal space.

*Advanced warpdrive:* Better warp generators enable a starship to travel at speeds 100 times faster than can be achieved by normal warpdrives.

*Teleportation:* Instantaneous travel across the universe for individuals or small loads is possible with this power.

*Stargate:* A stargate uses a form of teleportation. A fixed-location device (the gate) instantaneously teleports an entire spacecraft to another stargate. Stargates are assumed to be rare, being so powerful.

The type of stardrive determines its speed range. The power rank number determines its basic speed value, which is then multiplied by the standard modifier for that class of travel. Table 1 shows the basic starship types and their speed for the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game.

**Table 1**  
**Starship Types and Speeds**

Speed (in multiples of lightspeed)				
Rank	FTL	A-FTL	Warp	A-Warp
FE	2	20	200	20K
PR	4	40	400	40K
TY	6	60	600	60K
GD	10	100	1K	100K
EX	20	200	2K	200K
RM	30	300	3K	300K
IN	40	400	4K	400K
AM	50	500	5K	500K
MN	75	750	7.5K	750K
UN	100	1K	10K	1M
X	150	1.5K	15K	1.5M
Y	200	2K	20K	2M
Z	500	5K	50K	5M
1000	1K	10K	100K	10M
3000	3K	30K	300K	30M
5000	5K	50K	500K	50M

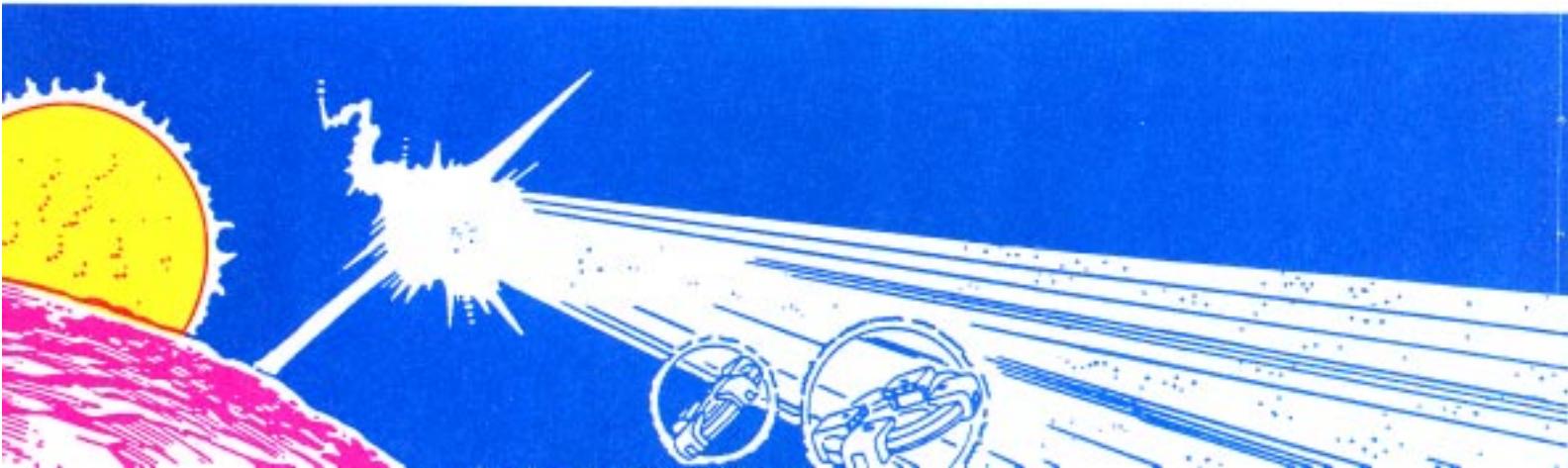
K = 1,000; M = 1,000,000.

## In the wink of an eye

Stargates and teleportation systems and powers enable travelers to instantaneously cross long distances. Travel time is limited by the amount of time it takes to make each jump and the number of jumps necessary to cover the desired distance. Most

**Table 2**  
**Starship Flight Category**

1d100	Category
01-10	STL
11-25	TRL
26-45	A-FTL
46-55	STL/Warp
56-75	FTL/Warp
76-85	A-FTL/Warp
86-90	STL/A-Warp
91-95	FTL/A-Warp
96-00	A-FTL/A-Warp



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teleportation systems are designed to handle individuals or small loads. They may be placed on planetary surfaces or built into spacecraft of any sort.

Stargates are immense portals capable of handling entire starships; these devices often appear to be titanic doors or hoops miles across. Objects must be able to physically pass through a stargate in order to "see it." Starships can be moving at sublight speed when they "see a stargate, although the ship must be piloted very accurately. The Shi'ar are the primary users of stargates; they maintain a network of them through the universe, including one within 10 lightdays of Earth. At this time, the gates are heavily guarded at the Shi'ar ends.

A portable stargate was left in Manhattan by Shi'ar agent Davan Shakari. This stargate is currently powerless and thus can only receive travelers. However, it can be made operational by a power source of at least Shift-X intensity (for example,

Firelord's cosmic power). 'This stargate's existence is known to the X-Men, X-Factor, Firelord, Lilandra, Misty Knight, and Jean Grey's parents. Although it was last seen on the roof of Misty Knight's apartment, the current location of the stargate is unknown. Unless the stargate is reprogrammed, it will send any user to the unnamed world within the Shi'ar Empire that holds the M'Krann Crystal. This barren world is normally uninhabited. This stargate can be reprogrammed by an Incredible Reason FEAT

### Natural spacewarp

The structure of the Marvel Comics' universe is riddled with spacewarp. These function as interdimensional tunnels that enable any ship capable of FTL flight to swiftly cross enormous distances in even less time than usual. Earth is near one of the largest junctions of spacewarp in the universe, a crossroads for half the known starfaring races. This is one of the reasons why Earth keeps attracting so many space travelers. Known warps include several linking Earth with various points in the Andromeda galaxy and one to the Kree Empire in the Greater Magellanic Cloud, a satellite galaxy of our Milky way galaxy.

### Your own starship

The MARVEL SUPER HEROES Advanced Set contains the basic procedure for building your own starship. If takes an Amazing Reason FEAT to design a star-drive capable of FTL flight. The Resource FEAT is X rank for a basic FTL ship, higher for a more advanced model.

Sometimes a powerful energy source can be used to modify an STL ship to FTL speeds. One such example was the "se of Thor's Mjolnir to propel a Quinjet between the stars. Such an energy source must be of at least Unearthly rank, and the ship to be so modified must have at least an STL drive.

Starships can also be directly gained by a variety of means, proper and improper. Ships may be recovered if abandoned, stolen from their owners, or rebuilt from parts scavenged from damaged vessels. Terrans kidnapped by aliens might overthrow their captors and seize the aliens' ship for themselves. A starfaring race may present a Terran with a starship as a gift or reward, such as when Prince Dezan gave a Skrull starship to the Fantastic Four. If all else fails, travelers can always try buying a starship, assuming your PCs can find one for sale.

Tables 2-4 can also be used to quickly generate a starship with a few rolls of the dice. Table 4 determines the number of typical humanoids that can be kept alive by the life-support system, allowing at least one chair or berth for each potential passenger. If a cargo ship is desired, subtract 1-10 crew-beings and multiply the remaining number of passengers by 200 lbs. to get the starship's cargo limit.

**Table 3**  
**Starship Speed Ranks**

1d100	Speed rank
01-08	FE
09-16	PR
17-24	TY
25-32	GD
33-40	EX
41-48	RM
49-56	IN
57-64	AM
65-72	MN
73-79	UN
80-85	X
86-90	Y
91-94	Z
95-97	C1000
98-99	C3000
0 0	C5000

**Table 4**  
**Starship Passenger Loads**

1d100	Maximum passenger load
01-20	1
21-60	1-10
61-90	1-100
91-99	1-1,000
00	1-10,000

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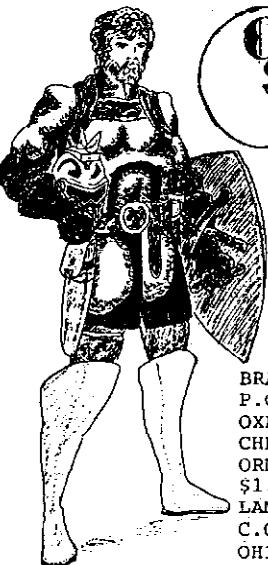
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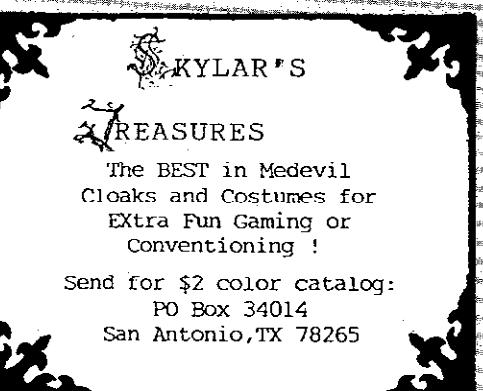
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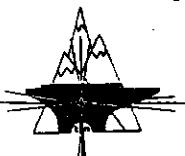
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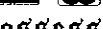
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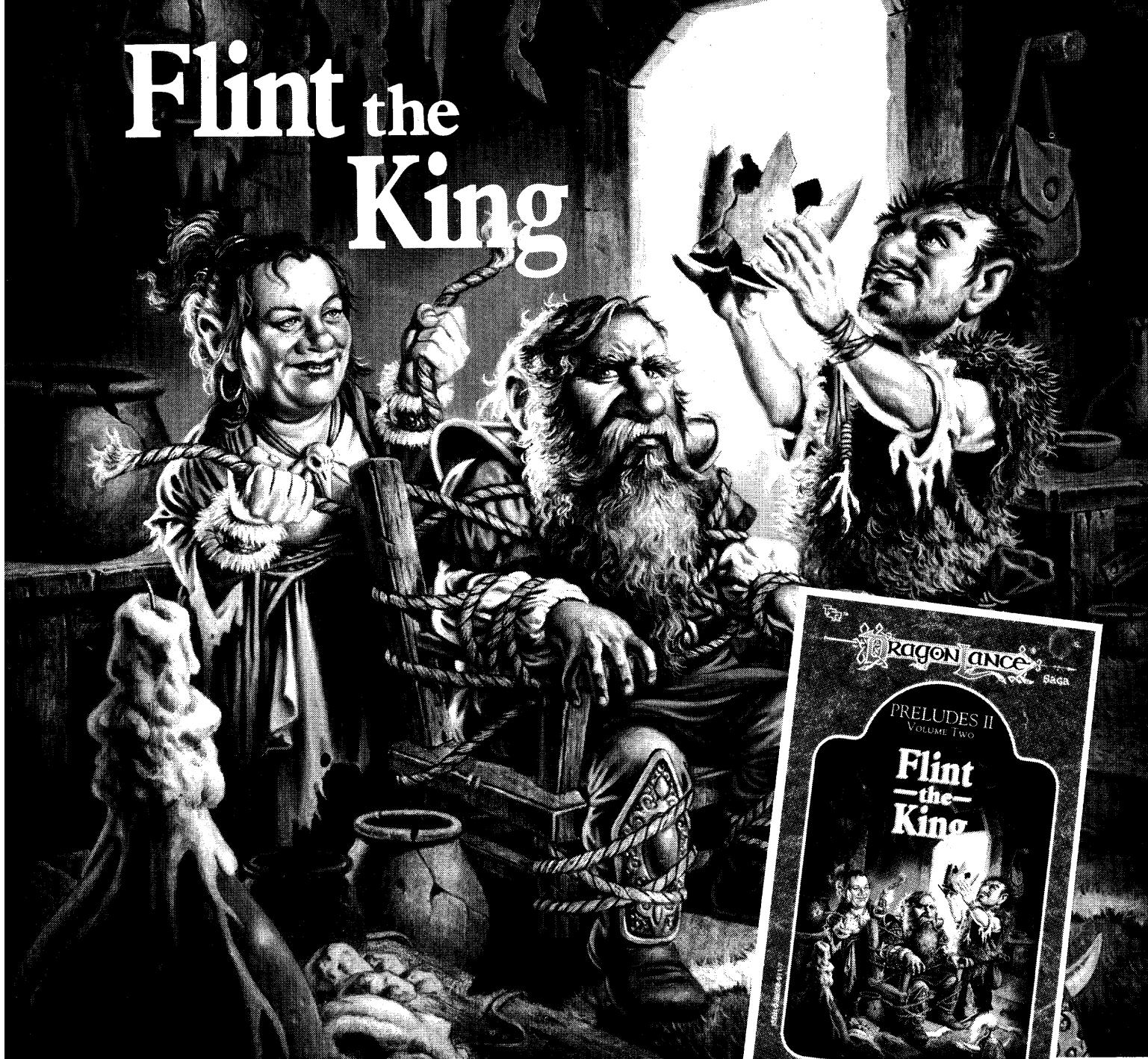
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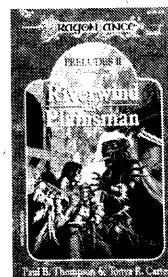
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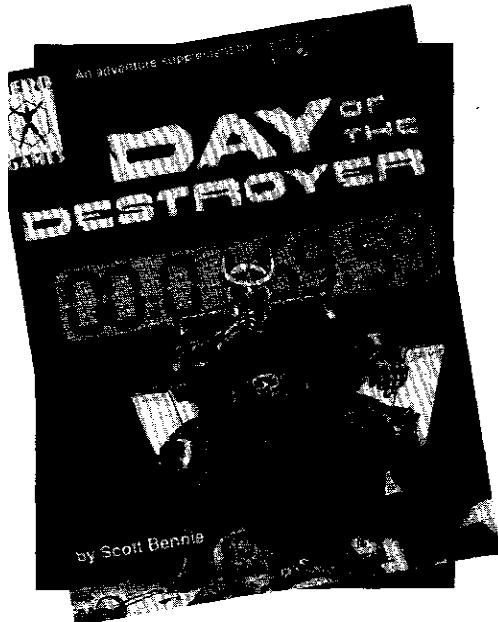




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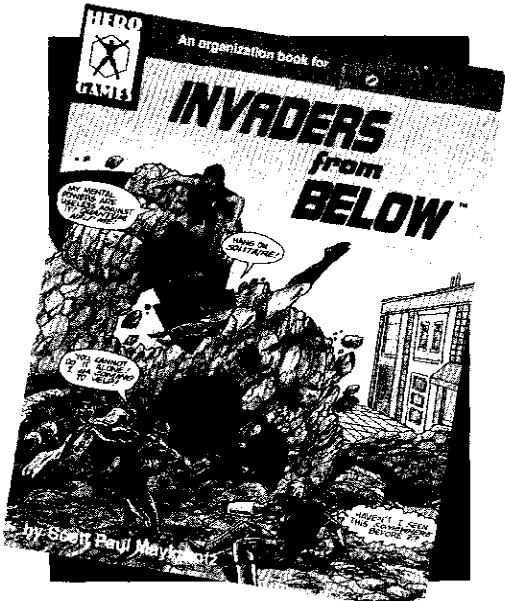
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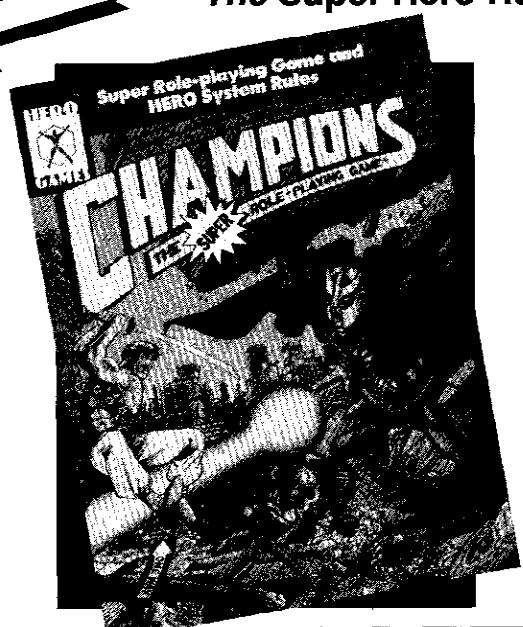


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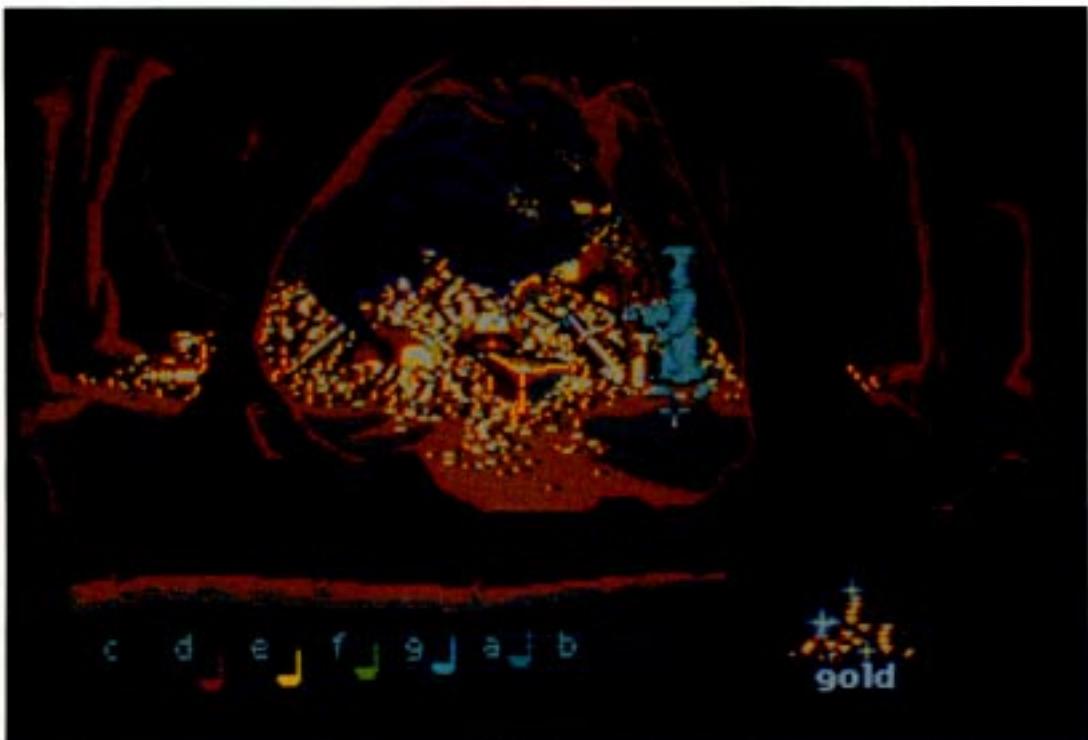
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THE ROLE OF

# Computers

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*Loom* (Lucasfilm Games)

## Magic, adventure, and the joys(?) of atomic war

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Before we delve into this month's reviews, we'd like to define the differences, as we see them, among the games we review. For software gamers, there are four basic genres of entertainment: animated adventures, role-playing simulations, arcade/action games, and strategy games. At rare times, you might find a single offering encompassing two of these environments.

Animated adventures are graphically rich, musically superior adventures wherein you become the lead (and only major) character on a quest. This game is like a motion picture, an interactive movie that is played out for your enjoyment based upon your decisions at various branches of the adventure.

A role-playing simulation differs in that you must create a party of characters to accomplish the quest. These simulations are usually based upon a specific role-playing system, such as TSR's AD&D® game or GDW's MEGATRAVELLER™ game. You control everything these characters do and attempt to gain experience for them so that the ultimate goal of the game can be accomplished.

Success at an arcade/action game depends upon your skills in manipulating a joystick to control your character. These games usually require face-to-face confrontations with enemies, and your sword- or magic-wielding accuracy depends upon how well you manipulate the I/O device (mouse, joystick, trackball, keyboard, and so on).

The strategy game is designed for those who are tacticians. These gamers follow historical and futuristic confrontations with fanatical attention to detail. Movement points, individual squad strengths, choice of weaponry, terrain—all are important in determining how a war is won. Many offerings allow players to restructure history itself and usually allow for hundreds of hours of gaming because of the product's intricacies.



*Loom* (Lucasfilm Games)

You can save games in progress, which is highly recommended. As soon as you have completed a scene to your satisfaction, save it! You simply press the F5 key to save, load, or continue play. You may also select one of three modes of play: Standard, for regular game play with a little help from on-screen items; Practice, to learn the mechanics of the game before starting the adventure "for real"; and Expert, which does away with some of the visual assistance.

Accompanying the disks is a Dolby stereo tape that helps you to enjoy the adventure by leading you into the world of *Loom* before you boot the software. And you'll also find a red gel that is the game's copy-protection device. You must define certain portions of drafts (musical spells) for specified guild icons, and the only way these musical icons are readable is through use of the red gel.

*Loom* follows the life and times of one Bobbin Threadware. Bobbin is with the Guild of Weavers and starts the adventure totally inexperienced in the ways of magic. Believe us, by the end of the game, he'll know a great deal! In *Loom*, sound becomes magic. A thread is a combination of four musical notes ranging from c to c'. Each series of threads produces a draft—a spell. A correct draft produces an effect upon its target.

To cast drafts, Bobbin uses the magic staff of the Elders. You'll find this staff, called the distaff, on-screen below the animation window. Below the distaff is musical staff notation, with the letters c, d, e, f, g, a, b, and c in the seven sections of the notation. Each note represents a section of the distaff.

You select the target for your magic by clicking on it with the on-screen cursor. The target becomes identified with both its picture and its name appearing in the lower-right corner of the screen. You then activate your draft in one of three ways: click on specific sections of the distaff that correspond to the musical notes; click on the notes found in the notation; or enter the notes via the keyboard.

As you play the notes that make up the draft, your distaff sounds each note while illuminating that section of the distaff. If you are successful, you see that your

target is illuminated in white, shining light. If the draft was incorrect but still bona fide magic, the target is illuminated with reddish light. If you performed an incorrect draft, nothing will happen except that Bobbin will acknowledge that it probably was not a draft in the first place.

If your draft is correct, its effect will occur after the target is illuminated. For example, one of the earliest drafts you learn is that of dyeing. As this draft works only on wool, you soon note that once the white illumination has ceased, what was once plain, white wool is now colored. (Don't forget that wool can also be found a-hoof!)

Little occurs within this engrossing adventure that should not be taken note of. Write down what is seen, heard, or said. The most minuscule fact could easily be overlooked, and that fact might affect the adventure 20 scenes down the road. One enjoyable aspect of *Loom* is that the adventure was designed to be won. We guarantee that anyone with a modicum of common sense and delight in fantasy will win this game. It won't sit on your software shelf gathering dust.

Yes, there is a great deal to learn and a great deal to listen to, but the effort is worth the outcome. Not only is *Loom* delightful to run, but it is a visual treat as well. As with all Lucasfilm Games products, the programming that produces the animation, graphics, and sound is all first rate. The AdLib score is also top notch, and we can only imagine how delightful the Roland MT32 MIDI sound track must be.

The secret to the game's success is the characterization of the hero, Bobbin. He is an extremely likable individual, with a sense of humor as well as a sense of responsibility. The manner in which you, as Bobbin, overcome the adventure's trials requires logical thought.

The game also comes with a Book of Patterns, your personal diary of spellweaving. Two drafts are already completed in the book: Opening (e c e d) and Transcendence (c' f g c). However, the latter spell is not draftable until the end of the game, after you have acquired knowledge and skill and have been awarded the 8th note. Oh, we forgot—when you start the game, all you know are the three notes c, d, and e. You'll gain the other notes as you successfully complete various parts of the adventure. As you learn various drafts, write them down in the Book of Patterns—in pencil, as you will probably make mistakes in your assumptions. Also, should you start a new game while having saved an old game, the drafts will be different. For example, Kirk and Hartley played *Loom* separately. Hartley's draft for Emptying was: g e e d. Kirks draft was: g f f e. As you can tell, cheating by looking at someone else's drafts won't help!

*Loom* is so good that it retains its five-star rating despite minor technical difficulties encountered early in the adventure.

## Reviews

### Computer games' ratings

X	Not recommended
*	Poor
**	Fair
***	Good
****	Excellent
*****	Superb

**Lucasfilm Games**  
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**Loom** \*\*\*\*\*  
PC/MS-DOS version \$59.95

Brian Moriarty, whose Infocom text adventures are now classics, wrote *Loom*. He wanted to create a fantasy adventure that moved away from the stereotypical characters found in the majority of fantasy worlds—orc, trolls, hobbits, and the like—and he succeeded! One reason *Loom* receives our five-star rating is that it has an original plot and great craftsmanship. Within *Loom*, you'll encounter a variety of guilds whose followers specialize in specific crafts, such as crystal-makers and blacksmiths; there are even shepherds who possess no mean skills.

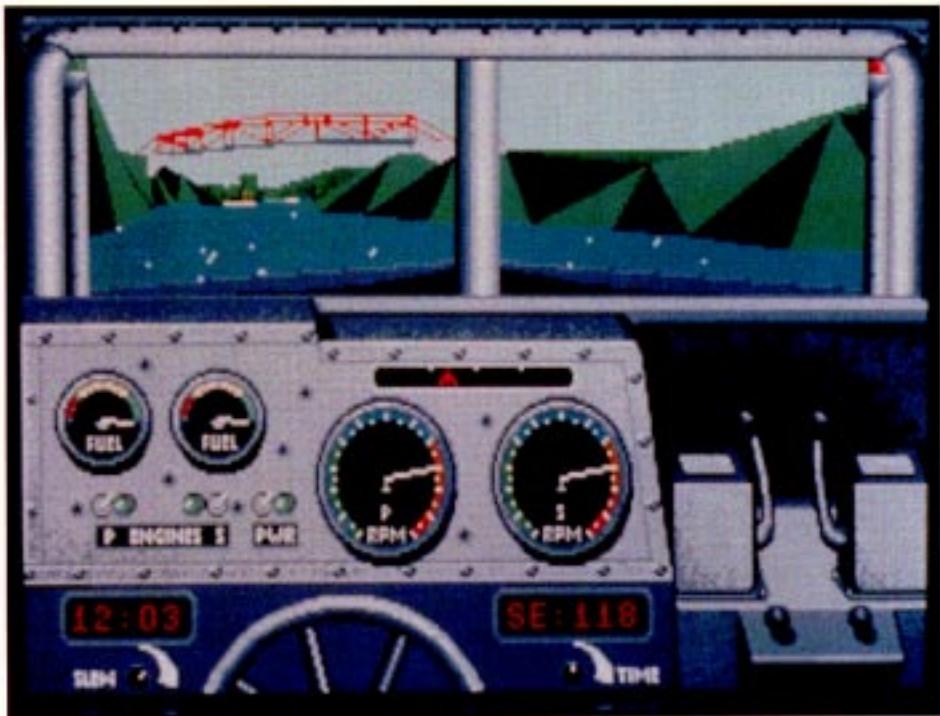
Three of the early animated scenes produced butchered text on the screen. If two lines of text were displayed and Bobbin moved off the right side of the screen, then half of the previous text remained on-screen when the new screen appeared. Incoming, new text was superimposed on the old text, making it hard to read. This was especially true during the first viewings of the *Loom* itself. A minor point but one that should be addressed in future releases. We also experienced one game crash that occurred early in the game, when we double-clicked on a target and struck a note key at the same time. However, this crash was the exception, as it did not occur again. Kirk managed to reach the adventure's conclusion in six hours and Hartley in eight hours, at the Standard level of play.

The problem with *Loom* is that—well, it ends! The adventure is engrossing and exciting, especially as you uncover the means to cast magic in scene after detailed scene. It is extremely disappointing when the story comes to its conclusion. Brian and the creative folk at Lucasfilm Games have managed to create truly memorable characters and, like a good book or fine film, you hate to leave them after spending so many good hours with them close at hand.

However, be of good cheer. For if you analyze the last few scenes of *Loom*, you realize there *must* be a sequel in the works. After all, how many Lucas films managed successful sequels? And believe us, *Loom* plays far more as an interactive movie on your computer monitor than as a software game. We recall that Chaos has an important feather in its possession, and the Pattern can be repaired! All those who were lost *must* be reunited with Bobbin and the Elders.

This review boils down to the fact that *Loom* is special. It is highly entertaining and is so unusual that you must experience it. We recommend its purchase.

This game was reviewed on a PC/MS-DOS AT clone with an EGA board and EGA monitor plus the AdLib sound board. It is playable through use of the mouse, joystick, or the keyboard. The PC/MS-DOS version requires an IBM microcomputer or clone or a PS/2 with at least 512K of memory. The game supports VGA, EGA, CGA, MCGA, and Tandy 16-color video boards. Also supported are AdLib and CMS sound cards. For those fortunate (and wealthy enough) to possess the Roland MT32 Sound Module or Roland's LAPC-1 Sound Card, you'll need 640K of memory and a hard-disk drive. *Loom* can be upgraded for \$10 to address these advanced MIDI-compatible sound systems. Even though a hard-disk drive is not required, we highly recommend it as there are six 5.25" game disks and the scene access is far faster when read from the hard disk. An installation program for transferring the files from the floppy disks to your hard disk is included.



Gunboat (Accolade)

#### **Accolade**

550 South Winchester Boulevard  
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#### **Gunboat**

PC/MS-DOS version

\*\*\*\*

\$49.95

*Gunboat* is a river combat simulator that puts the gamer into the pilot's chair of a Patrol Boat Riverine (PBR). These boats were skillfully employed in Vietnam and are likewise engaged in difficult missions in this simulation. As you complete each mission, you are promoted and earn medals. You start out in Vietnam and, when you earn your second lieutenant's bar, move on to battle the drug kingpins of Columbia. Make the grade of lieutenant commander and you're patrolling the Panama Canal Zone. Each mission is well designed and certain to put you in the heat of action.

Using the keyboard, the function keys, and the (preferred) joystick, you move through a number of stations aboard your PBR, including those for the pilot, the stern gunner, and the midship gunner. After you have equipped your PBR, these stations can be brought into play by simply pressing their corresponding keyboard keys. From the pilot station you can also command your crew to Open or Cease Fire (you don't have to man the gun emplacements unless you have a good feel for how the simulation is commanded). You control the spotlights and the ship's speed, and can identify targets for your gunners.

*Gunboat* is a fine combat simulation. The only historical area I found deficient was

in the Vietnam combat environment. Having served with the Mobile Riverine Force in Vietnam in 1968, I know that hostile encounters with the VC did not consist of the enemy actually exposing themselves to our fire by walking directly to the water's edge from jungle concealment and opening fire on our PBRs with small arms. Most of the time, incoming fire was directed from concealed, fortified emplacements packing heavy machine-gun and mortar weaponry.

A second problem is that a code wheel is needed to enter the actual simulation, and we found one correct code entry was not recognized by the program. When this occurs, you are forced to practice your gunnery. Fortunately, a hit of the TAB Key brings you back to the codewheel copy protection method, and you can try again. Accolade doesn't dump you to DOS as some games do, requiring that you reboot the game.

Keep an eye on your damage reports, keep your joystick powered forward, and kick the enemy's butt. *Gunboat* is an exciting and better-than-average combat simulation. It is the first PBR simulation I've seen, and it offers a constant challenge to increase your grade through commanding difficult missions. It is worth adding to your software library.

The game requires an IBM PC, XT, AT, PS/2 or compatible computer supporting VGA/MCGA, EGA, CGA, Tandy 16-color, or Hercules MGA graphics boards. It supports Ad Lib, CMS, Roland MT32 sound boards. The game requires 512K RAM.

**UBI Soft Entertainment Software**

(distributed by Electronic Arts)

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**Iron Lord**

\*\*\*\*

Commodore Amiga version \$39.95

Originally developed in France, this fantasy game sports some of the most unusual graphics, animation, and sound yet released in a computer entertainment. Playing this game is like interacting with a motion picture. The change of musical theme and tempo matches your speed as you gallop from town to town. No matter how many times we played this game, the music never interfered with play.

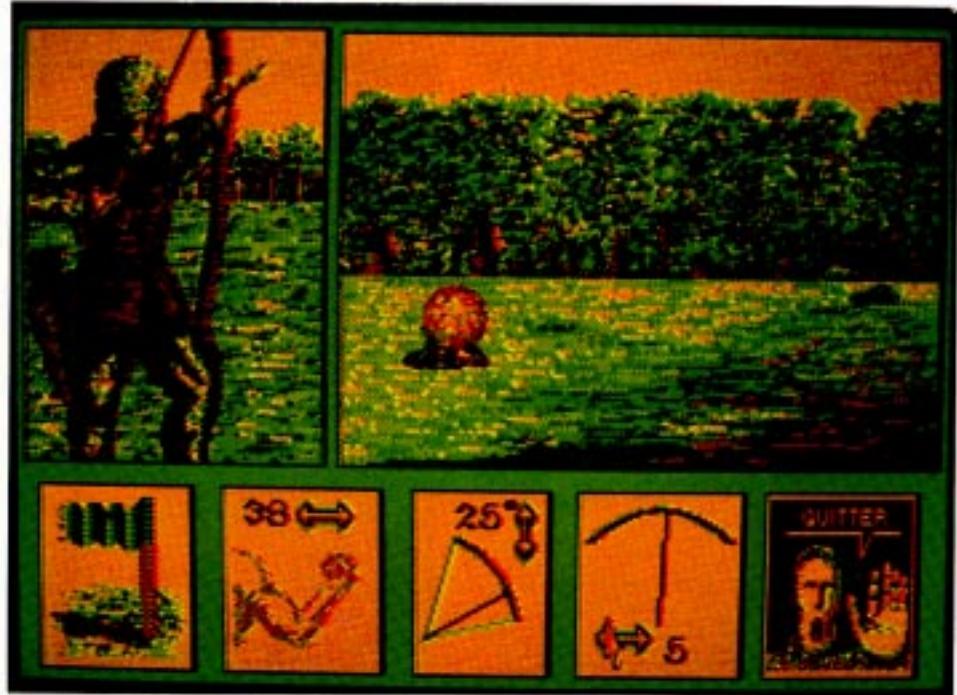
You are trying to rouse the inhabitants around your ancestral castle in order to battle the Army of Chaos. Your uncle, Zolphar, usurped the throne from your father in a bloody coup years ago. Now it's up to you to get revenge and inherit your crown.

You can visit seven locations in your attempt to build an army. First is your castle, which serves as your HQ. This is the only area where you can save your game, a point that can become a hindrance. If you gain influence in an area, you must ride back to your castle at once in order to save the game; should you be killed in the next sequence, you then won't lose all of your time and effort in rebooting. You can declare war from your castle, but only after you build your army.

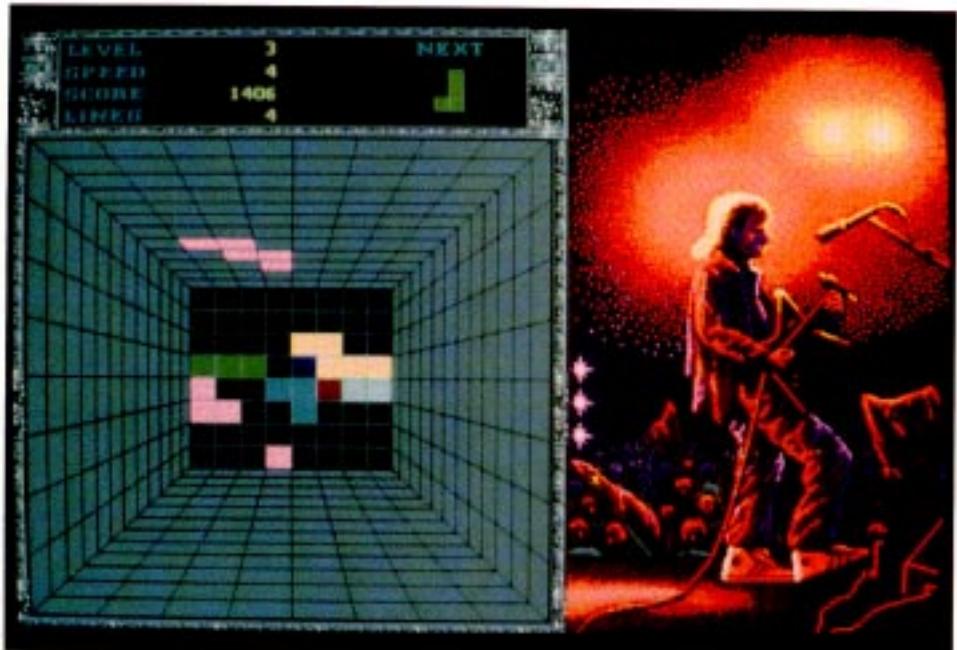
Other areas you can visit include: the Seer's Cottage (perhaps some magic is available there!); the towns of Chatenay Malabry, Lorando, and Torantek; the Templar Abbey; and the Miller's Cottage. Sometimes you'll be asked to intercede for someone and right a wrong, such as collecting overdue payment for services. You can also engage in a first-rate archery contest, games of chance such as dice, and an arm-wrestling competition to increase your influence.

The final battle is awesome. You must assemble your volunteers in an all-out effort to defeat the Army of Chaos. Don't even think of trying this unless you have at least one regiment of soldiers at your command. You must also keep in mind your troop's morale. There are two stages to the battle: troop movement and combat itself. If you survive the onslaught, you've still got to get through the Labyrinth and its dangerous surprises before you can battle your evil uncle. Swords and keys can be found on each level. Should you get through a Labyrinth level, you must still succeed at an arcade phase that pits you against monsters who enjoy throwing acid at you!

Ah, but all is not so perfect. For example, the game requires that you use both a mouse and a joystick. The former is required for your character's activities, such as selecting your destinations on the on-screen map, walking about, and selecting



Iron Lord (UBI Soft Entertainment Software)



Welltris (Spectrum HoloByte)

items from a menu (such as Discuss or Buy). The latter is required for combat. This means that you must drop the mouse to take up the joystick to parry an attack and to inflict damage on an assassin; within three or four slices, you're mincemeat. The game does not simply restart; you must reboot your Amiga with *Iron Lord's* disk one in your dh1: drive. This seems somewhat awkward, especially as most action sequences in other entertain-

ments do not require grabbing a different I/O device for special sequences.

*Iron Lord* is a very good game. It could have been a great game where it not for the confusing I/O device requirements and the fact that you can only save the game in one location. Despite these drawbacks, *Iron Lord* will remain in our active library as we forge ahead and try to defeat the Army of Chaos and that rotten uncle!

**Spectrum HoloByte**  
2061 Challenger Drive  
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(415) 522-1164

**Welltris** \*\*\*\*\*  
Macintosh IIx version \$39.95

Once again, Alexey Pajitnov has coded a truly marvelous arcade treat. He is known for his first work, *Tetris*, that won major software awards from magazines and publishers alike. Now *Welltris* offers the gamer an even more complex gaming environment.

What a player notices immediately when playing the Macintosh version of this game are the striking colors in the authentic Russian artwork and the strident Russian music (written by the talented folk at Ed Boga Productions). *Welltris* is a step beyond *Tetris* in that you are given three difficulty levels and five speed settings. Until you believe you have mastered the game, start at the slowest speed, then, watch and learn how this highly addictive arcade game can drive you up the wall.

In *Welltris*, random blocky shapes tumble down a 3-D four-walled well. As the shapes drift toward the bottom of the well, you can turn them on their sides and move them around the wall itself. You are trying to position the pieces so all fit on the first layer of the well. As other pieces tumble downward, you fit the shapes together in carefully fitted layers. You can request that a shape be previewed by the program before it drops down the well. This helps you figure a fit for the shape before it actually falls. If you can fit the pieces so they form a line from one wall to another wall, that line is removed and you can fit more pieces on that level. You'll continue to fit pieces as long as there is room at the bottom of the well. Each successful fit scores points. The higher the speed at which you fit the pieces, the more points are awarded. If you can clear the entire well, you'll be rich with points!

This game's copy protection is quite sensible. You are shown a flag of one of the republics within the Soviet Union and are asked either the republic's name, its area in square miles, or the name of its capital city. You leaf through the user's guide, locate the flag, and type in the answer.

A word of warning to Macintosh II players: Remove the 32-Bit QuickDraw file from your System Folder before you start play. If you don't, your system will crash. The alert is not found within the manual, but a call to Spectrum HoloByte assured me that the company is fixing this.

*Welltris* is certainly the finest arcade game we've played so far this year. It will take one heckuva program to top this one as far as its total play-to-dollar ratio, and we doubt whether many gamers will ever grow tired of playing *Welltris*. The challenge, sights, sounds, and constantly changing facets make this game an experience not to be missed.

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**Nuclear War** \*\*\*\*\* 1/2  
Commodore Amiga version \$49.95

When Balance of Power fails, it's time for *Nuclear War*. In this tongue-in-cheek game, one player competes against four world leaders. The object of the game is to be the only surviving nation on Earth with a population of at least one million people. The other leaders are also trying to accomplish this goal. However, the other leaders each have a personality flaw that affects his strategy. Personalities include a pacifist (Jimmy Farm), a liar (I-f-icky Dick), and a warmonger (Ronny Raygun).

The game is divided into a series of turns. A divided screen reveals your own nation and the others in the current game. The screen corners show the world leaders and their reactions to you. On each turn, you can readily see how many people another leader has in his nation. You can also tell how other world leaders are reacting to that leader on a scale of 1-100. These reactions are a major force in helping you determine your moves.

Each turn leaves many options available. First, you can use propaganda against another leader in hopes of turning several million of his population to your corner. Propaganda doesn't always work, and you can actually lose folk instead of gaining them. You can also have your population build for a turn in hopes of making missiles, bombers, warheads, and strategic defense systems. The numbers and kinds of weapons created depends on how many people are in your nation. Building for more than one turn is called stockpiling, and that hurts your relationships with other countries.

A player can also prepare a missile or bomber during a turn. During the following turn, you can load nuclear megatonage up to the limit of the missile or bomber payload. Missiles range from the 10-megaton capacity Carnage missile to the 100-megaton capacity Pacifier missile. A missile carries its payload to a target and is then lost. The two bombers, the NP-1 (for Nuclear Postman) and the GR-2 (for Grim Reaper), have a 50- and 100-megaton capacity respectively and can each attack several different targets.

For defense, the player can set up a Laser Net Defense System that destroys incoming missiles during that turn. Or there's the Peacekeeper MegaCannon, which can be utilized to keep any missile or bomber out of striking distance.

Once you've selected an option for the current turn, the screen changes to a world overview and the moves ordered for the turn are then carried out. Random events—earthquakes, meltdowns, population explosions, 16-ton weights, flying saucers, and mass defections—bring cheers of hope or cries of anguish to any

country. If a country's people are completely obliterated, that country uses its final strike. This means the country fires off its entire arsenal of missiles and bombers at countries ranging in order from the least favorite nation to the most respected nation. If someone actually becomes the victor, his name is etched into the game's hall of fame.

Considering the dire nature of the game's subject, some gamers will probably not like its treatment of war. Then there are others who enjoy games like *Balance of Power* or *Descon 1*, and they will think this tongue-in-cheek nuclear-war game is a real treat. Many gamers will find the humor in the comic characterizations of world leaders to be entertaining. The game is certainly challenging.

My only criticism is that only one person can play this game against four computer opponents. I would much prefer having the option of four human competitors with the computer available to fill any empty character slots. Otherwise, if a comic treatment of nuclear war doesn't offend you, go out and get *Nuclear War* and irradiate someone.

## News and new products

Accolade released Chris Crawford's *Balance of the Planet* in time for Earth Day on April 22nd. This game takes a complex issue and, turns it into an engrossing, fulfilled simulation with a high degree of accuracy. You are appointed by the United Nations to the post of High Commissioner of the Environment. The powers of the office involve levying taxes on industry and granting subsidies to worthwhile activities. Issues to be grappled with include acid rain, water pollution, nuclear accidents, global warming, consumer goods, and starvation. Points are given for industrial productivity and the absence of toxic pollution. The simulation is available for the Macintosh or PC/MS-DOS computers at \$49.95.

Broderbund Software (415-492-3200) has released *Wolfpack*, a detailed graphic simulation of World War II naval combat between German U-boat wolf packs and Allied convoys. The simulation is for PC/MS-DOS computers at \$54.95. Each screen features 256-color VGA graphics, and the game fully supports AdLib, Sound Blaster, and Tandy Sounds. You can choose sides, and the simulation comes with 12 easy-to-understand scenarios of various levels of difficulty. There is also a detailed mission construction set so players can create their own scenarios.

A second offering from Broderbund is *Prince of Persia*, for PC/MS-DOS and Apple IIGS computers. This game has a suspenseful plot with a romantic Arabian Nights atmosphere. You combine exploration and puzzle-solving as a young visitor with whom the beautiful Princess, the daughter of the Sultan, has fallen in love. The Grand

Vizier Jaffar, intent on seizing the throne himself in her father's absence, plans to marry the Princess. You are thrown into a dungeon, and the Princess is given an hour to choose between the Grand Vizier or death. You escape from the cell and—well, there are more than 250 screens in this adventure. A continuation feature allows you to stop playing and then resume at your current level.

Data East USA (408-286-7080) has released *North & South*, a strategy game for PC/MS-DOS and Atari ST computers at \$39.95, and for Amiga computers at \$44.95. You use strategy and skill to guide your troops through famous Civil War skirmishes. With four stages of battle, players are able to control different numbers of armies and territories, launch attacks, and travel from state to state as they confront the challenges on their way to victory. There are three levels of difficulty. You can start the conflict in any year from 1861 to 1864. This game includes Indian attacks, storms, and unexpected reinforcements.

Another Electronic Arts-distributed label is Strategic Simulations, which has released *Second Front* and *Waterloo*. *Second Front* is one of the most detailed war games SSI has ever published. It is a division-level strategic game that extends from Berlin in the west to Stalingrad in the east and covers the entire Russian Front. One or two players command over 150 German divisions and over 200 Soviet divisions, with data available down to individual tank, plane, and infantry-squad level. Pop-up menus and state-of-the-art graphics are used to direct air operations such as interdictions, airlifts, and strategic bombings. You can control production facilities or let the computer handle production. The price is \$59.95 for PC/MS-DOS and Amiga computers.

*Waterloo* enables you to recreate one of the greatest military battles of all time. Static 3-D scenes of the state of the battle may be viewed from any position or in any direction, and the battle is controlled by giving orders to the generals in text form. The generals interpret orders according to their nature; an impetuous general will charge in with everything, while a more cautious general will shell the enemy for hours. The price is \$59.95 for Atari ST, Amiga, and PC/MS-DOS machines.

Media Technology (301-926-8300) is now shipping *Dragon's Lair: Escape From Singe's Castle*. Based on the videodisc game created by Don Bluth, this is the latest sequel in the continuing adventures of Dirk the Daring. Princess Daphne has been captured by Singe the Dragon and spirited away to the innermost recesses of the castle. As Dirk, you must save her from the clutches of the Evil Shapeshifter who lurks deep within the catacombs. Only 512K of RAM is required, and the game can be installed on any Amiga hard-disk drive for \$69.95; versions are planned for the Apple Macintosh and Atari ST

computers.

MicroProse Software (301-771-1151) is now marketing Paragon Software's *Mega-Traveller 1: The Zhodani Conspiracy*, based on the role-playing game by Game Designers' Workshop. Players assume control of five unique characters as they travel to the Spinward Marches on the frontier of the shattered realm of the Imperium. The character-generation system provides five military classes and more than 70 talents and abilities. Each character is controlled separately in real-time combat sequences on the ground and in space, with more than 30 weapons and weapons skills. *MegaTraveller 1* will be released for PC/MS-DOS computers.

Sierra On-Line (209-683-4468) has released *Codename: Iceman*, a fictional but all-too-real look at the espionage and politics of a clash between the superpowers. Released for PC/MS-DOS computers, it costs \$59.95. Additional versions will be released soon for the Commodore Amiga, Apple Macintosh, Atari ST, and NEC 9801 computers. This Tom Clancy-style technothriller is set in the year 2000. Although it is an animated adventure game, it offers a full submarine simulator, and much of the game takes place underwater. Using a keyboard or an optional mouse, you can work the gauges and steering wheel in the sub. An improved parser provides a much more life-like feel to the action.

Also from Sierra is *Conquests of Camelot*, a King Arthur adventure, for PC/MS-DOS computers. You travel from Camelot to the Holy Land in search of the Holy Grail. The search will test your character's will, faith, and physical prowess. *Conquests of Camelot* features combat that brings role-playing elements into this 3-D animated adventure. The price is \$59.95, and a cluebook is coming for \$9.95.

Taito (604-984-3344) is releasing several new entertainments for the Nintendo Entertainment System, including *Target Renegade*, *Wrath of the Black Manta*, *Dungeon Magic*, and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. Coming for Game Boy are *Flipull* and *Space Invaders*.

## Clue corner

### Autoduel (Origin)

In the final mission, head east when coming back from Watertown. Don't stop at truck stops if you can help it or else you'll get shot.

Gavin Snyder  
Ft. Lauderdale FL

### The Bard's Tale II (Interplay)

1. To gain a lot of experience points quickly, take a party of two medium-level characters out on their own and seek out sorcerers. You will find that if you let them call up 55 ninjas and you disbelieve them BEFORE you kill the sorcerers, you will receive 65,280 xp!

2. If you have a party of four characters,

you will have to double the number of ninjas disbelieved to get the same amount of experience.

3. When fighting conjurers with a two-character party, 50 wolves called up by the conjurers are worth 30,848 xp. With a party of six characters, 50 wolves are worth 10,602 xp.

Murray Weissman  
Glenside PA

### Battletech (Infocom)

1. The best 'Mech is a modified Commando.

2. The spare parts are in the northeast corner of the cache. The Phoenix Hawk lab is in the southeast section of the cache.

Andy Ahnn  
Anaheim CA

### Mechwarrior (Infocom)

[C64/128 version:] If you don't have a 'Mech, go to the arena and sign in. In the arena, if you cycle through your targets, you will find one called Enemy Spectator in the west wall. Destroy it and go through the hole in the wall. You'll have lost your deposit, of course, but you will have gained a 'Mech. Although it's a Locust, it's better than no 'Mech at all.

After you find Dr. Tellhim, go exactly in the direction he specifies to get to the Star League cache.

Gavin Snyder  
Fort Lauderdale FL

1. Shoot for the legs of an enemy 'Mech, as your salvage profit will be higher.

2. Always leave one 'Mech (with your crew) on guard at the mission objective.

3. Try to get missions like guard duty—make the enemy come to you.

4. As the enemy approaches you, move to the side. Most of the time you will be ignored. Volley on the enemy as they pass.

5. As your reputation increases, better pilots and gunners will appear. Drop your weakest-skilled gunner/pilot *before* you enter the bar.

6. Learn where the pause key is!

David Waters  
APO NY

1. Traveling to the bar at Lands End will put you on the path toward tracking down your family's killers and recovering the chalice. Accept the pirate Grig Griez's mission but feel free to return later to pay him back for any acts of treachery. Sometimes the 'Mech complex will also have visitors that can help you.

2. Remember that the clock is running even as you try to gather the funds to build your lance of 'Mechs. Select missions that involve only short trips, unless you believe the payoff is particularly high for a longer trip.

3. A good way to obtain more credits is to sell your Jennifer at Land's End, perform Griez's mission, then go to a planet where 'Mechs are cheaper to purchase. If you are

determined to find out the chalice's location right away, do not bother to buy a new 'Mech. Once you have that information, you will have enough money to buy a new 'Mech.

David Rakonitz  
Menlo Park CA

#### Pool of Radiance (SSI)

In Sokal Keep, you don't need to fight the undead! Translate the dead elf's words with the translation wheel. Use the middle word on the random undead patrols, the top word on the groaning spirits, and the bottom word on the pale spirits.

When you enter Podal Plaza, sneak around. Head toward the center of the plaza. When you get to the auction, listen for comments. This will tell what kind of object is for sale.

There is also a manual in Menthor's library that you can sell for 25,000 gp. Also, keep some Detect Magic spells handy and cast them after a fixed battle; you might get a surprise!

Christopher Ozols  
Eden Prairie MN

(Want to "find" some interesting items?) First, be certain that one of your characters has at least 10 to 15 arrows. Next, have your cleric or magic-user cast a Detect Magic spell. Enter one of the weapon's shops in the city. Choose the "View" option and view the character with the arrows. (The arrows should *not* be readied!) Now, choose the "Half" option and continue to split the arrows down into smaller units. Even when your character's backpack can hold no more items, continue to split the arrows. Continue to watch your screen display for a magic object. I have done this many times, and each attempt has resulted in a mysterious item that appears in the character's list of items. The object may be just about anything. Usually I received a cursed bag, but on one occasion, a Long Sword + 3 and a Broad Sword + 2 appeared. Be warned that sometimes, when the object appears, it will take the place of another object in your pack. But that's the chance you take to obtain something worthwhile!

A. J. Velez  
Stonington CT

The captain of the Buccaneer's Camp is worth fighting. Memorize a Detect Magic spell for use after the fight!

Eliminating all the spectres in the graveyard first will save a lot of trouble later.

It pays to help the Nomads.

Quicklings can be put to sleep.

There are fourteen 8th-level fighters guarding the Boss. Be prepared!

The Baglione Brothers  
Columbia MD

Once you have found the stairway entrance to Tyranthraxus's lair, use the Dust of Disappearance before you enter. Encamp outside the entrance, get ready, and

use the dust. This will render your entire party invisible. Go down the stairway, and you will be immediately confronted by a number of guards. Spread your party out. Have your magic-user cast as many Fireball spells as he or she can manage. Then close in with the rest of the party and clean up. Tyranthraxus will confront you and ask you to make a choice. Vote to attack. Then close in on him immediately and hammer him with no mercy. Enjoy the ensuing experience-point award!

I also have another suggestion; do this each time you start *Pool of Radiance*. After you load a saved game, and before starting the adventure, remove all characters from the party and then add them back. This keeps the current statistics of your character in the character pool list. If a character dies, drop him when encamped and save the game. Restart the game and add the dead character back to your party from the character pool list. This is a great gift from the Silicon God himself!

John Martin, Jr.  
Skiatook OK

1. An easy way to conquer the slums is to hire two heroes, find and enter a combat, then accidentally (oops!) cast a spell (either a Sleep or a Stinking Cloud) on them—but don't target them! Once down, kill them; don't worry if you're good, the heroes were evil. Their plate and two-handed swords are both +1. Use this technique to get rid of the trolls and the ogres in the slums as well. Put the heroes in front, let them take most of the damage, then kill them near the end of the combat.

2. In the evil pyramid, to get to the pollution's source, go to the first room to the right of the entrance and enter (do not throw a rock). The rock-throwing sequence is as follows: 0 (as above), then go to the opposite teleporter and throw three rocks before entering, then throw three again, and then one rock. . . .

3. A certain fighter in the maze has a most interesting long sword.

Ted Yep  
Calgary, Alberta

(Werner Hager of Boulder Creek, Calif., claims that he and his friends Josh Bendon and Joe Brigham conquered the game in two weeks flat! Here are his tips.)

If you find an item on your equipment list called Of Displacement Fortress, go to the nearest temple and get Remove Curse cast on that character. Then sell that item for a large amount of cash. You'll notice that your character will start regenerating any damage at 1 hp/round.

If you are also having a hard time with the game, you really should purchase the FORGOTTEN REALM™ module, FRC1 *Ruins of Adventure*, from TSR. It is based on this computer game and offers several important clues. But don't trust *everything* you read! *In reality*, Pool of Radiance was based upon FRC1, not vice versa. Jim Ward, of TSR, Inc., points out that killing

*the vampire in the graveyard isn't quite the same when you compare the module version to the computer game, so watch out!—The editors*

If you are having difficulty getting through the mazes of Valjevo Castle, follow these directions:

1. Go through the west entrance to the mazes. A map to the first maze may be found under Journal Entry #41.

2. Go to the southeast corner of the maze and save your game here.

3. Turn north and head straight through the poisonous thorns. If one of your characters dies, restart and try again.

4. Once you are through the thorns, go through the east door. Turn south and go through what seems to be a wall. At the top of the stairs is a secret door.

Abel Strong  
Greenville MI

That's it for this month. Again, please remain considerate of fellow gamers. Tips and hints about games that can save them from doom and devastation might be returned in kind one day! Mail your game clues to The Lessers, 179 Pebble Place, San Ramon, CA 94583, U.S.A. Until next month, game on!

Ω

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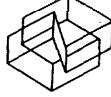
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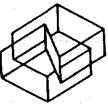
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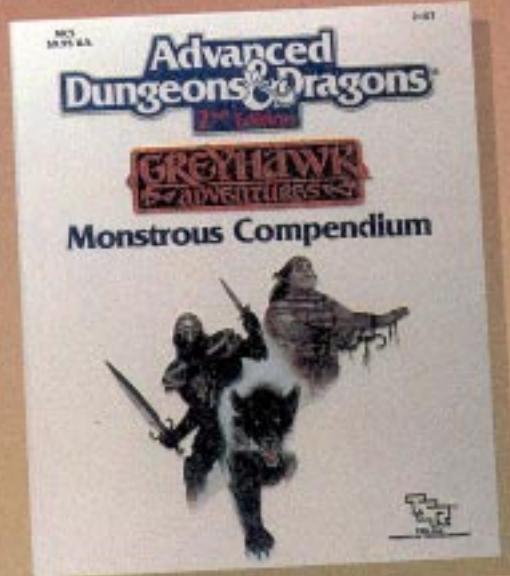
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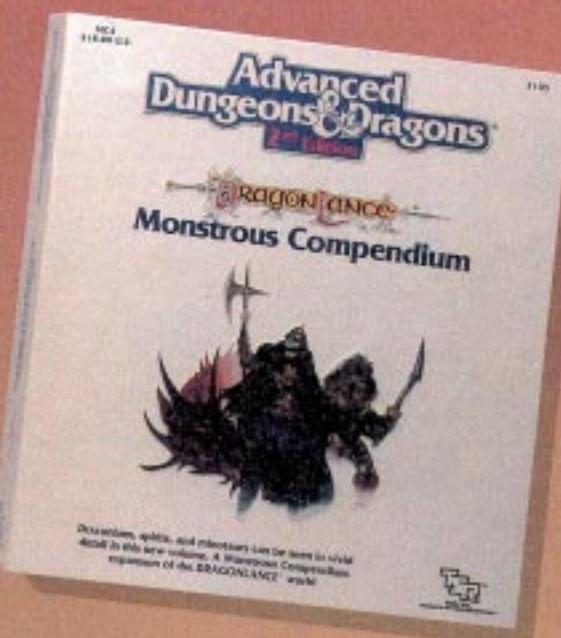
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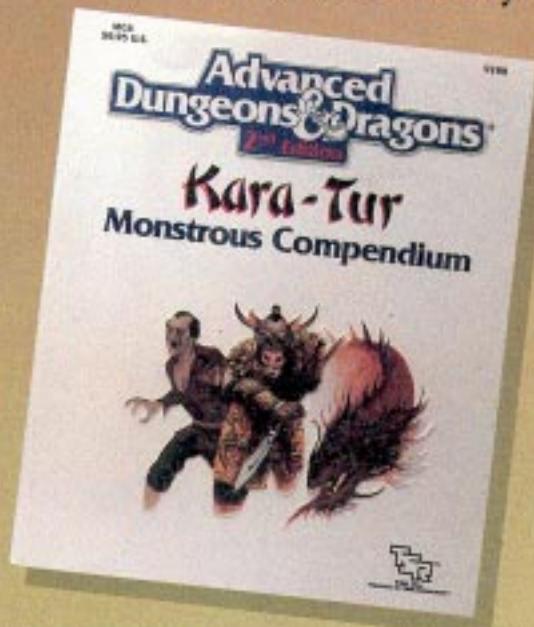
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I  
SULMARI

It happened one time that the wizard Hath was young and took the wanderlust. He left the cities and wizards of the north and went where his feet took him.

One day he stopped to lunch upon the broad flat rock in the farthest meadow of the Kettry lands, where the first offspring of the first mating of mountain ponies and lowland horses ran at the heels of their dams. Hath sat licking his fingers and admiring the river valley below him, and a vision seized him between one bite and the next.

Hath saw the southlands stretched below, altered in the warp of time. He saw engines of war rolling up from beyond the south. He saw valiant armies ride forth, to be crushed and scattered by men of strange aspect with strange weapons like no magic he knew. He saw the invasion thunder northward to his feet, and just as it would engulf him, the flat rock beneath him opened up and a hundred shining warriors rode forth. He saw a hundred warriors, brave and skillful, with swords of might, keeping all the lands north of Kettry free.

Worst of all, he saw himself at the head of these warriors. When Hath woke and saw the horses peacefully grazing around him, he trembled and he wept. With a sore heart, he laid aside his wanderlust and set about the task laid on him.

At the monster-guarded lake of Ralanan he built an island from huge bones dredged out of the depths by magic. He bargained with the dwarfs, detecting for them lost hoards of dead dragons and glittering veins of untouched ore. In exchange, they built his battlemented keep and forged armor and weapons finer than any seen before between the mountains and the sea. As they built and labored, he went searching, bringing together the sons of lords and farmers, kings and fishermen, to learn the arts of war and sorcery.

All year they dwelt upon the Isle of Bone, learning every art that it would be good to know when the terror came from the south. No stranger set foot upon the isle, but once a week a crofter rowed to the steps below the gate, bringing fruit and bread and meat. For this he was well paid. Hath was training the greatest warriors that the land had seen, and not a king or a general but would spend his asking price to train their sons with him.

Each Midsummer they embarked in silken-sailed ships to gather on the crofter's field and tourney with all comers. It had been called the Low Field, but it became the Field of Merry Battles. Those comers who acquitted themselves well were admitted to the training, while those students who were beaten were turned away. So famous became these tourneys that men came from the bleakest, farthest northlands and bore strange swords out of the desert south of Griffinvale to compete in them. Men would leave their sweethearts, their wives, their children, and their kings to train a year upon the Isle of Bone.

The crofter's eldest daughter, Sulmari, grew to her full age, witnessing these tourneys and working hard to feed the crowds that came. All women were forbidden to speak to the warriors of the Isle, for Hath feared the soft edge of a woman's voice against the hard edge of duty—but she



# he Waiting Woman

By Peni R. Griffin

*Illustrations by Martin Cannon*

had eyes. A day came on which she noticed one man out of all of them, one who seemed to her as much better than his fellows as the moon is better than the stars—more handsome, more graceful, kinder to his horse, quicker to smile, sweeter to laugh, greater-hearted in victory. Her eyes sought this Balan out wherever he might be, and sometimes it seemed his eyes sought hers in return.

It was her dear despair and her unhappy pride that he was as fine in the fray as any of his peers, and year by year he returned to the Isle of Bone. Her father growing old, Sulmari assumed the task of carrying provision to the Isle. Never could she set foot on it or exchange a word with any man there but Hath; but sometimes she heard Balan's voice or saw him from afar. On those days she rowed slowly home, to move silently about her work and look carelessly upon the farmers, fishermen, herders—yes, and warriors—who came to court her.

Year by year, the tournaments went forward. Year by year, fewer and fewer new warriors were admitted, and more and more contests ended in draws as there came to be less and less to choose among the warriors of the Isle of Bone.

At last, the summer Sulmari was thirty, came a great fray in the Field of Merry Battles. Three days and three nights it raged; in the end, Hath, drooping with weariness, called a halt, for it was clear that the hundred men remaining were so evenly matched that not one could gain advantage of another.

Hath clapped his hands. The field fell silent. Small boys ran out with water for the warriors. Sulmari saw Balan ruffle the hair of the boy who gave him drink, and smile, and let the boy hold the sword the dwarfs had forged.

Hath was an old man now, his beard the color of Death's eyes, but he spoke out fair and strong of his vision and the terrible engines from the south and his shining warriors. "Here before you now you see those warriors," he said, "and if they are not the greatest of the regions between the mountains and the sea, it is because their superiors are not yet born. Who the invader will be, or when he will come, I know not; but these hundred will await him beneath the flat rock, though they sleep a thousand years in readiness. We ride at daylight for Kettry. Let none hinder us."

A hush fell over the Field of Merry Battle. Sulmari's heart grew cold and still. As the warriors retreated to their tents and the crowds murmured, she withdrew to her own room and provisioned herself for a journey.

A great crowd surged after the hundred as they left Lake Ralanian forever, and Sulmari was, but one among a thousand. The hosts, fell away as the miles passed, and only a handful rode onto Kettry lands to see the rock split apart and the warriors file wordlessly in. With a wave of his hand Hath closed the rock, and the people dispersed to their own places—all save one.

Sulmari approached Hath as he sat upon the rock, gazing out over the rolling country of his vision. He knew her, and he bade her sit beside him. Together they gazed southward, and she told him how her heart was set.

"He does not know you," said Hath.

"He may," said Sulmari. "Fifteen years have I waited, and would wait a thousand more for that bright chance. I have been patient with your rules, Hath. I have let hope

serve for action when I might any year have gone among the tents and tried to steal him from you."

Hath moaned softly. "You know not what you ask! Think of it—a thousand years or more, maybe! The tongues and ways of men will change; we will be a hundred strangers, leaping from sleep to war; and maybe your Balan will fall before you hear his voice. You are a foolish woman. Go home."

"You are a foolish man," said Sulmari. "Will you remain awake here, alone and old? On the day of waking, would you be tired from centuries of care, or fresh from sleep? Yet someone must stay awake, lest sword and armor rust, and the hair of your shining warriors grow long to bind them to their beds. Better me than you, surely, to polish and clip and clean through the long years?"

Hath felt his age lying heavy on his bones and considered the long, dull years to come. The more he would persuade her, the less he wished to face those years himself. At length, then, she won him over. And thus it is, when we pass the Field of the Flat Rock at twilight, it is a woman's form we see, looking southward for the war that will end her waiting.

## II LORD KETTRY

He was three years old when he first heard the story of the Waiting Woman. His nurse, Adi, liked to take the children to picnic on the flat rock, and it was a natural tale to tell young Kettry of Kettry and his older sisters as they ate cold chicken and gathered dandelions. He was seven years old before he saw her, however, for the field was the farthest from the house, and till then he was not allowed to roam at evening. It was a warm summer night, and he was thinking of other things entirely, urging his pony after his sister Violet as they rode for home and supper.

She stood on the outward thrust of the rock, looking down on the first faint lights of Rosetown on the river below. Her clothes looked gray in the twilight—long, thin clothes, not like the full skirts and lacy bodices women usually wore. Kettry turned his head to look at her as he rode behind her, and as he did a rabbit jumped and his pony shied.

Ketry cried out once and then had control again. In that time she had turned, her body arrested in midmotion as if she had been about to leap off the rock to his assistance. He waved at her. She waved back. Her face was too far away to see, but he felt her eyes follow him as he rode after Violet.

"How long has the Waiting Woman been there?" he asked that night as the children sat around the window, fresh, clean, and ready for bed.

"Oh, a thousand years or so, maybe," said Adi, knitting beneath the lamp.

"Then it must be almost time for the invasion."

Violet shuddered. "I hope not!"

"Sit still," said Saffron, the oldest girl, who was braiding her little sister's hair. "It might come along any day now, but that's always been true. Hath's vision didn't tell him when the invasion would come."

"True enough," said Adi. "It might be another thousand years yet."

"Poor lady," said Kettry. "What does she eat?"

"Magic," said Adi. "Don't you worry about her. She's made her own bed, and it's her own doing if she don't lie easy."

Ketry found he did worry, though, or at least think of her. By day there was never any trace of her, though the hands who rode the south pastures assured him she was there without fail at sunset. "She comes out for air then," said Young Flandru. "I think the sunlight hurts her eyes."

"Is she nice?" asked Kettry.

"Oh, she's good, all right. We had a mare, couple years ago—you're too little to remember—got loose to foal in the last winter storm, and Sulmari brought her under the rock to save her and the foal. You got no call to fear her."

"I don't!" said Kettry scornfully. "I mean—is she nice? Is she friendly?"

Young Flandru laughed. "Now that's not a word I'd ever think in the same thought with her! She never speaks to me. She never speaks to anybody, unless she needs to."

Ketry thought about that. "That's rude."

"She can't afford to go around making friends, just to watch them get old and die. It's hard enough on her without that."

"But—doesn't anybody ever talk to her?"

"My old man talked to her once. Long, long time ago."

Ketry rode down to the cottage where Old Flandru spent his days in the sun and found him willing enough to tell over a tale he had already told many times—yes, and many others, too, which distracted Kettry from his interest only during their telling. "Y'see, boy," said Old Flandru, peering at him through milky eyes, "people'd hardly begun to breed horses back in them days. It wasn't no thousand years—six, seven hundred, maybe—but that's long enough to breed finer horses than old Hath ever dreamed of."

"Our horses," said Kettry proudly.

"Ours, aye. That Sulmari, she's got eyes in her head and brains behind them. Every now and then she'll wake one of the horses and lead it out to trade. I struck a deal with her, back in your granddaddy's time, when he'd given me charge of a string to trade for new blood stock." Here he went off, tangentially, on a discussion of the finer points of Kettry horses in general and these in his charge particularly, what he was trading them for, and what was lost or gained in the bloodline because of the deals he struck. Kettry waited patiently for his subject to return.

"I had to go right past the flat rock at dawn, and she was waiting for me. Only time I ever saw her come down off the rock, or any time but evening. She had a bay gelding to trade for a dapple gray. Gray was too big and had a mean streak; we'd trained him for a war horse. Bay was nice—bit coarse—but I couldn't use the tackle. Would've been laughed off the horse lot. She threw in a couple of right pretty rings for boot. Your mama'll have those, I reckon."

"But what was she like?"

"Oh—skinny. All those years of living on magic, most like. She had a good set of hips; I noticed that. Put some meat on her, she'd be fit to bear any number of kids, or would've been if she'd started earlier. She talked funny, but she had a good hand on a horse."

Ketry went about his life, learning his letters, his sword, and his studbook with the thought of that slim, lone figure under all his other thoughts. When there was a great baking or he brought home game from river, wood, or pasture, he would go round by the flat rock and leave some choice bit there—a pheasant, or a mess of clams, or a napkin of sweet rolls. The next day they would be gone, but whether she had taken them or left them to the merry skipping goblins who sometimes held their revels on the rock, he could not tell.

He saw her more as he grew older, but could not gain speech with her. When she saw him approach purposefully, she clambered down the rock and disappeared, leaving behind only a smell like lightning. This troubled him, for whatever Young Flandru said, it could not be good for her to dwell alone and friendless so long. When his mother's cat kindled, he chose a kitten from the litter and left it on the rock with a ribbon round its neck, just as the sun declined. He stayed to watch her find it, and the sight of her bending to pick it up and hold it to her cheek struck him with an unexpected blow of happiness. When his father's prize bitch whelped, he chose a puppy for her, and thereafter she did not appear alone upon the rock.

"I don't know why you think she needs your presents," protested Violet.

"Never rebuke a generous heart," smiled Saffron.

"But he'll be giving her a horse next!"

"She doesn't need a horse," said Kettry. "She never goes anywhere."

Saffron, as the eldest, was to inherit the land, leaving Violet and Kettry to pursue their interests. Kettry early showed an aptitude in arms that led his father to seek for him a position in the King's host. In his early youth, he got a place in the capitol in Morenidor, where he found interest enough and occupation enough that he did not think of the Waiting Woman for weeks at a time. Only, when the discontented junior officers spoke slightly of the chances of war being seen again between the mountains and the sea, he would remind them of Hath's vision. Also, among his friends there numbered a young, studious count possessed of lively sisters and a passion for the form and history of language. From him he learned the shape and accent of the tongue that would have been spoken when the Isle of Bone was a great war college and Sulmari rowed upon Lake Ralanan.

It was a hot issue among the men of the garrison who was the best at sword and shield, or upon horseback, or with a bow. Many contests were held in fact to determine the superiority of this one or that one; by candlelight, many more were held in fancy, in which some champion of the day was compared to some champion of times past. "I would there were some way to try those old heroes!" complained Selko of Old Woman Creek, who had fought his way out of the ranks and proved his might against all comers, nor ever tired of so proving it. "There's no man in the garrison hasn't yielded to me, and the game grows stale."

"You could try yourself against the heroes under my flat rock," suggested Kettry.

Selko snorted. "Against any number of sleeping men, even you could emerge victor."

"They may awake," said Kettry. "Sulmari can wake horses and trade them for better ones. Why not so with men? She wakes him, you fight, and if you win he remains awake, and you sleep till the invasion."

Selko laughed. "No, let them rest and be on hand to comfort each other when they wake in a strange time!"

He went home for Violet's wedding. With him he brought gifts—silks and jewels and pictures, a horse of the new strain developed in the high pastures of Titherland, and a bright bird of the Western Isles that he had taught to say his mother's name. One package he carried to the Field of the Flat Rock in the dusk of his first day home. Sulmari vanished as he came, but he left the package where he had left so many things, and stole away.

Next evening he stayed late in Rosetown, among the laughter and music of the wedding, but the night after he rode out alone. She stood in her accustomed place, aged dog and cat with her, and he flinched in disappointment at the sight. She wore none of the fine clothes he had bought for her. He rode closer.

She turned and saw him—as she always turned and saw him—but did not vanish down the south face of the rock. His pulse thudding in his throat, he rode till he was at the edge of the rock. She stood still, the dog by her side, the cat in pursuit of invisible things upon the stone. She tossed him his package and he caught it. "You are a sweet boy, Lord Kettry," she said in a voice that sounded to him like water after drought, "but I can accept no more of you."

Ketry's mouth was so dry he almost could not ask: "Why not?"

"I think you know why. Are there not many women in Rosetown and Morenidor who could accept your gifts?"

"Why should you alone of all womankind never know the pleasure of a new dress?"

"It is my choice."

He recovered his wits then and answered her in the old language the count had taught him. "You came late into Hath's plans, and he perforce provided ill for you. It is no shame if you accept my poor attempt to make it up to you."

Sulmari was silent so long he feared he had chosen the wrong tongue, but soon she spoke as he had, only more easily, without groping or hesitation. "I am well provided, Lord Kettry. Where did you learn that speech? It has been dead these many hundred years."

"Not dead, but sleeping. How are you provided?"

Her eyes lay on him, and their touch was sweet. The last of the sunset vanished, the dog scratched, and the cat hurled itself upon a rustle in the grass. "Dismount and enter, then, if you would see."

He dismounted. She made a short, sharp movement with one hand. Silently, but with a smell like lightning, the rock opened along its steep face. Sulmari descended by means of steps upon the inner face of the rock. Kettry left his horse to graze.

She led him into darkness. They pushed back an obstruction like a tapestry and came into a low room. The dog went at once to the hearthrug, the cat to a cushioned chair. Here were a table, chairs, and a narrow bed, a tall cupboard and an iron chest. The floor was made of earth,

the walls of stone. The fire burned low, without fuel, and all the furnishings were heavy and old, of unfamiliar pattern and strange shape. There was a bright light in the stone ceiling, of a nature Kettry could not fathom.

Sulmari raised the lid of the iron chest. "You see? If I desired it, could I not walk as fine as your mother—Lady Saffron—the queen, even?" The strange light glinted on a host of precious stones, on coins, on rings and brooches, armlets, necklaces, tiaras fine as any worn at court—yet not one stone of it was faceted, and the shapes of the gold were odd and solid. Some pieces resembled jewelry he had seen in Morenidor: heirlooms of distant generations, dwarf-work bought with sums that must be whispered of for awe. The Waiting Woman shut the lid. "Will you be content now and get about your life?"

"No," said Kettry. "How can I return to my home and my garrison, telling this tale, and admitting that I came so far and left without a sight of the sleepers?"

Sulmari smiled wanly. His heart swelled against his breastbone. "Come, then. But having seen, you must go home—and no more foolishness."

A second tapestry lay against one wall, so faded with time he scarce could make out the subject, but it might have been the building of the Isle of Bones. Beyond was a long cavern, deathly cold, where one hundred beds of stone stretched out of sight. Beside each bed stood a horse in rich caparison of a sort Kettry had never seen before, but he knew the types of horses from the oldest studbooks.

The wizard Hath lay on the first bed, in loose clothes of strange cut with big, knuckly hands folded under his gray beard. The others bore weaponed men in mail of glittering dwarf work and surcoats of all colors. Weapons and armor were as clean as if used yesterday. The sleepers' hair and beards were neatly trimmed—in a style the court would have found ugly—and nowhere was dust or cobwebs or any sign that these men had lain down centuries before.

"Which is Balan?" asked Kettry, and wished that he had not.

Sulmari drew a wavering breath and walked to a man in a surcoat the color of flame. His hair and beard were dark, his features plain, his hands those of a good workman: large and square and broken nailed. His eyeballs rolled beneath his lids, and his chest rose and fell evenly. Kettry saw at a glance that the chestnut horse beside him was the best of the hundred, good Kettry stock from the time just after the light desert horses were introduced from the south. Sulmari bent above Balan's face, pressed his lips with hers, and covered his workworn hand with her own before she said to Kettry gently, "Will you go now?"

So Kettry departed, but he did not sleep that night.

Back in Morenidor, he threw himself into his life. He practiced till he defeated Selko three times running, which no man had done before. He attended balls and studied tactics; he interested himself in the breeding of more intelligent cats. He had to tell the story of his visit to the Waiting Woman many times and flattered himself that he did so with composure. His friends were all courting and marrying, but for him no woman roused any but the most fleeting desire, and his dreams were haunted by sad eyes in the dusk.

His friend the count had a sister with whom Kettry rode and walked and danced till the town grew expectant of them. One night as they sat together, this Revliri kissed him with a fervor that made him start, and shudder, and draw back. The look upon her face made him remorseful. "I never meant to mislead you," he stammered.

"I'm not the misled one!" she interrupted him in tones half anger and half scorn. "Aren't you ashamed to pine for one whose heart was lost to you before ever you were born? Sulmari is a phantom and a mist behind your eyes."

"Sulmari is as real as you, and more!" protested Kettry.

Revliri tossed her head. "When did things begin to be real in more or less degree? I think you are afraid, Kettry. If you want her so, why do you leave her there? No, you want love's shadow and you fear its substance: the woman who knows pain and jealousy and age, the woman with whom you might really live and who might really hurt you!"

"You are a jealous, spiteful woman, and your mouth is full of lies."

"You are a feeble, 'fearful man, and your life is full of lies!" She stalked away from him, and he never saw her more.

That night and the next night, Lord Kettry did not sleep. The third day he applied for leave and rode southward alone. He arrived at the Field of the Flat Rock in the dusk and saw her upon the rock, dark and slim against the glare of sunset. Spurring his horse, he called in a thunderous voice, "Sulmari.

She motioned with her arm as if to fend him off, but she stayed. "It would be better if you had not come," she said.

"And why is that?" he demanded. "Do I turn your heart from your long faith? Do you fear me?"

"No," she said, "but you are a good, a kind, a generous man, and it hurts me that I have hurt you with my faith."

"My pain is my own, as yours is yours," said Kettry, "and why either should continue I cannot say. Wake Balan."

"No! I gave my pledge—"

"Nor will you break it. Wake Balan. Tell him I challenge him for his place among the warriors. If I win he will be yours, and your children can tend the warriors as they sleep."

"You will not win," declared Sulmari. "If you thought you would, you would not challenge him."

"That's true enough!" He spoke as quickly as he could, mixing old tongue and new. "Your whole life—your whole love—is a snare and an illusion, and I will free you from it! He will wake and not know you. If he loved as you love, could he have gone to sleep, not knowing you would be here when he wakes? Can his love, that might come to be, compare to mine that is?"

"You don't know him!"

"Nor do you! But you will not believe it till you see the stranger in his eyes, and then your heart will break! But hearts are strong—your heart more than any—and once freed from your long dream, you'll see the worth of mine, and it will be our children who carry out your task."

Her mouth grew thin. "You presume much, my boy!"

"I risk much." But he could not remain hard with her, and the cat aided him by rubbing on his leg. He held out his hands. "What I gave you, I gave freely and never asked return."

"Very well," she said, "but when Balan has defeated you, you will learn the greatness of your error at such cost I would weep to think of it—were I able." She did not take his hands but turned her face southward. "Come rested and breakfasted, about dawn. This is no time for challenges."

Lord Kettry did not go home but stopped in with the hands, who were much surprised and made him welcome. He told none of them his plans but wrote a letter to Saftron and his father, sealed it, and gave it into Young Flan-dru's keeping.

In the dawn he met Sulmari at the rock, the first time he had seen her by daylight: as fair and pale as a candle in the sun. She said not one word to him but led him beneath the stone, and they stood one on either side of Balan's bed. "Are you sure you wish to do this?" she asked.

"Don't be afraid," said Lord Kettry. "This will be the end of all your waiting."

Sulmari bent and laid her hand on Balan's face, saying a word in a language even older than her own.

Balan stirred and blinked. Kettry saw his eyes focus on her face, and at the joy that leaped behind them his heart stopped.

"Sulmari," whispered Balan. "No. It's another dream."

"It is waking, Balan," she answered, "but only for a little while."

He drew her face down and kissed it—once, twice, thrice—breaking off the last kiss with a shudder and thrusting her away as he sat up. "Business first, and all our lives thereafter. How far is the enemy?"

"No enemy. Not yet. Only comes a foolish boy, with dreams he doesn't understand, who would try his strength with yours."

Balan looked at Kettry then for the first time. His face was open and genial, reflecting back the light of Sulmari's eyes. "Better leave it, son. That's no life for a young man."

"That is for me to say," said Kettry.

Three days and three nights they fought, and men and women gathered like dreams around the edges of the flat rock. Many times Kettry longed to lay his sword down, but he held the look that had passed between Sulmari and Balan in that moment of waking, and grimly fought on. Time and again he would have lost, but arts do not stand still, and tricks had been trained into his arm that Balan had no chance of knowing. Time and again these tricks forestalled Balan and made him laugh. It was one of these tricks at last, learned from Selko, that sent the heavy ancient sword clattering to the rock and brought Lord Kettry's point into the hollow of his rival's throat.

Balan blinked three times in surprise. "I yield me, then, unto the better man!" He fell upon his knees, it might be in weariness, or in respect. Lord Kettry did not care, for the world roared in his ears, and his legs gave out beneath him.

No lack of hands were by to help him up and carry food and drink to his lips, but none of the hands was Sulmari's,

and he cared nothing for them. When he could walk, he thrust Saffron aside and went to them. She nourished Balan in little bites and sups on the edge of the flat rock. The eyes she turned on Lord Kettry were not the eyes that he had known, for all the sadness of her waiting had gone out of them. Kettry knelt before her. She laid her cool hand on his cheek. "This is not the end you looked for, and I cannot even tell you I am sorry."

"I knew, when I saw him know you on his waking, that that end could not be. He left me only one service I could perform for you." He turned to Saffron. "Look after these two."

"Of course I will," said Saffron. "Come home now."

Ketry shook his head. "I have a duty to perform, and it were best to do it now before I shirk it."

Once more Sulmari led him below the rock, where he was bathed and dressed and led to the bed where Balan had lain. He took his place among the shining warriors, wondering what they would think of him when they woke and found him their companion.

"Bear greeting to my friends when they awake," said Balan. "You are the fittest man I've seen to be among them."

"You honor me too much," said Kettry, "but I thank you."

Sulmari said nothing, but the last thing he knew before he slept was the light touch of her mouth upon his mouth, and this he carried into his long, long dream. Ω



# Pulling a “Con” Job

So, you really want to run a convention?

by Thomas M. Kane

We wanted to share the thrills of adventure with new people. We wanted to help gamers meet each other, and we wanted to propagate the hobby. We also wanted a project to justify taking money from the Student Senate, so our Table Gaming Club established its not-quite-annual UMF-CON. Soon after that, the Maine Wargamer's Society invited us to co-sponsor its larger MAINE-CON convention, and we gladly worked on it, too. In the course of it all, we cleaned up peanut shells, hosted a "Smurf Kill," and managed business transactions with help from a Hindu economist who spoke only a variant of English. If your club can brave dangers like this, you will find no project more exciting than holding a small gaming convention.

## Square one

People go to game conventions to play war games, and in some form of karmic retribution, convention planning takes these gamers and subjects them to the chaos, boredom, frustration, and bureaucracy of real war. You already know everything you need to have a convention—games, a place to play those games, and people to play them. The difficulty comes in assembling all this in the right place at the right time. Without some central organization, convention organizers will argue over trivial matters—and forget to secure rest rooms.

You should probably name two or three people convention chairpersons to direct all activities. Decisions take too long when

more than three people try to wrangle them out, but if there is only one chairperson, he might vanish at a critical moment. The primary role of convention chairpeople is to decide what needs to be done and to make sure that somebody does it on time. Each convention chairperson needs a list of everything that has to be done and when it must be accomplished. Although these things all seem obvious, they really can be forgotten. The Table Gaming Club starts work on UMF-CON in September, then holds the convention during early spring. Our UMF-CON timetables run as follows:

**1. Choose a date:** Set the date at least six months in advance, and make sure it doesn't overlap other important dates.



## 2. Locate a convention site and

**hosts:** You cannot hold a convention without a building. Finding one is the most important and often the most expensive and difficult part of running a convention. If you do not know of a good site, try contacting public buildings like colleges, technical schools, armories, high schools, community centers, or—for the wealthy—hotels. Perhaps you will find a completely new sort of place to have a convention. If a rich friend offers you a country mansion, grab it. Find a building and be sure you can have it before you advertise.

Obviously, it is far easier to run a convention if the staff already controls a site, so look for co-sponsors who own a building. The most helpful co-sponsors are college student organizations. A gaming club would be ideal, and bureaus in charge of recreation or general entertainment might also help you. Official university groups can usually reserve college buildings free of charge. College game clubs also provide a staff of able assistants. Furthermore, if the game club receives college funding, it will not only have money but the members may be eager to spend it. Many organizations on a fixed budget have to use everything they get, because anything they do not spend will be deducted from the next year's allotment. If you cannot find a university sponsor, hobby shops or local chambers of commerce may help you locate a convention site.

You need more than a building, however. Be sure that your gamers have places to

park and that rest rooms are available. Find tables, chairs, and as much gaming equipment as possible. In an overnight convention, you might look for a place where gamers can sleep. The owners of your building may insist that the convention carry insurance. Peter Irce of MAINE-CON, told us that he cannot insure his convention *because it is so safe*. Since there are no known life-threatening disasters at game conventions, insurance companies cannot compile risk statistics. Mr. Rice avoids this problem by buying insurance in the name of his hobby shop.

**3. Contact other sponsors:** You may want other services to be provided at your convention, such as food. Some public buildings have contracts with a certain concessions company like the ARA conglomerate. If your convention site has such an arrangement, you need only contact the official food agency and discuss the convention with them. Otherwise, you may still be able to find local merchants who would be glad to sell snack food at the convention. Usually, local merchants operate independently from the convention staff—they do not pay you, and you do not pay them. You can make similar bargains with owners of hobby shops, who can sell miniatures, books, and games at the convention. Inviting a store to bring its wares not only provides another attraction for your gamers but also motivates the store to promote your convention.

If you want guests of honor, you must contact them quickly. Celebrities rarely add much to a convention, so avoid paying

honoraria. However, some authors actively seek chances to speak at conventions, hoping to promote their books. Using a well-known name makes your convention sound bigger and might attract a few fans, so if you think you can persuade a well-known person to offer some sort of game-related seminar, then try. You should make arrangements to pay the hotel and travel fees for your guests if at all possible, and you should let them know far ahead of time if their fees will be covered.

After making business arrangements, you might look for people who are simply helpful. Recruit as many gamers, game clubs, and civic groups as you can. Gaming groups may have special services for convention planners. Issue #47 of *DIPLOMACY® World* mentions a DIPLOMACY Hobby Events Coordinator who assists with publicity and provides information on nearby game fairs, to prevent competitive scheduling. If you are interested in this service, write to: David Hood, 604 Tinkerbell Road, Chapel Hill NC 27514, U.S.A. As word of your convention spreads, game companies might ask you to distribute advertising material for them. You should cooperate, because association with established companies not only promotes them but lends legitimacy to you.

**4. Submit magazine announcements:** Mail these the very day you know that there will be a convention. Nearly all of your guests will find your convention through convention listings in magazines. Most magazines take several months to print convention notices, and you want



readers to see your ad in several issues. Many periodicals, including DRAGON® Magazine, announce conventions without a charge, while others request a slight fee.

**5. First mailing:** After obtaining the absolute necessities, most conventions distribute their first advertising flyers. A flyer should describe the convention as completely as possible and give an address where interested gamers can write to preregister. Hobby shops will usually hand out these flyers. Small numbers of leaflets may be produced with a school ditto machine, photocopier, or even computer printer, but when you have a large number of pamphlets, it is worth the money to have them professionally printed. If you can get a mailing list of gamers, perhaps from another convention or hobby store, sent a flyer to everyone on the list. The post office offers bulk mailing rates to anyone sending over 200 identical pieces, if they are sorted by zip code. Ask for rules and forms at your post office.

**5. Precise planning:** After the first mailing, you should have about two months to wait for responses. During this time, pick GMs and schedule the convention's games, choosing rooms for each event. Two role-playing games can usually co-exist in a classroom-size area. Try to find a large room, like a cafeteria, for all board games and miniatures events. Other events, such as seminars or live role-playing games, often need rooms of their own.

**6. Second mailing:** About one month before the convention, distribute a second leaflet. At the same time, write preregistration forms. If these are short, include them with the second advertisement, but if this costs too much postage, you can reserve preregistration papers for people who write to you for more information. Each preregistration form should provide a complete schedule of events and GMs, mention all fees, and warn players how much experience they will need to enjoy each event. List any convention rules on these forms and try to provide maps showing the way to the convention from some major highway. Do not ignore the second mailing just because you have already sent out a first one. Most advertisers find that one letter only piques the audience's interest—it takes two to make people respond.

As the convention draws closer, put up posters about it in any available location. Gamers may see them in pizza shops, grocery stores, laundromats, or almost anywhere else. Write to radio stations and local television stations, too. They often provide public service messages for free. Sometimes a local-color story on your convention might result. You can also try to put articles into newspapers, but purchased newspaper ads seldom attract enough people to be worth the expense.

**7. At the convention:** A convention chairperson should be available throughout the convention. If possible, he should have a number of assistants to run er-

ands. Most of the problems at the convention involve getting people to the right rooms, so post floor plans of the convention site and have each game display a sign with its name and scenario. The convention chairperson on duty should also keep track of how many people register for each event. Few GMs want more than eight people in one game, so if an event is too popular, some gamers will have to make second choices. You will have a far bigger problem with games which do not attract enough players. The chairperson should warn GMs quickly if their event has too few players. This gives the unlucky GM time to enter another event as a player.

Conventions will never make anyone rich, but they can boost a club's budget. Both our tiny UMF-CON, in Farmington, Maine, and the enormous TRI-STATE-CON, in Cincinnati, Ohio, earn between \$2-12 with each registration fee and authorize sanctioned GMs to charge up to \$2 per game. You may charge a slightly higher fee for gamers who fail to preregister. However, only a tiny fraction of gamers will preregister, so do not make the penalty more than a few dollars. Visitors who do not wish to play should be allowed in free. This lets nongamers find their children, spouses, or friends—and watch your games. If you can get some novice intrigued enough to start playing games, you have not only helped your convention, but gamers everywhere.

Your gamers can give you more than money. Get names and addresses from everybody at the convention. A mailing list is not only useful for your own advertising, but every game store and convention organizer in your area will cover it. You can sell the list, bargain with it, or give it away to seal a friendship.

You will get more gamers, from more distant places, if your convention lasts several days, but complications multiply many times on the first night. The gamers need places to sleep and eat complete meals. If they cannot do these things on the convention site, they must find places where they can, and then be guided back once games begin again. Fortunately, after the first night, a convention usually runs smoothly again. If your gamers must find their own motels and restaurants, be careful not to schedule the convention at the same time as another tourist event.

You can do nothing kinder for your gamers than to provide cheap places to eat and sleep. If your convention grows large enough to promise hundreds of gamers, some motels and restaurants may offer you discounts. Until then, a dormitory would be ideal, and a gymnasium is a good place for gamers to lay out sleeping bags, especially if it has rest rooms and showers. In the summer, you might merely offer an open field, where gamers can pitch tents. If you do offer such facilities, be sure that the gamers understand and will obey any rules or mandatory "check out" times.

## Games and game masters

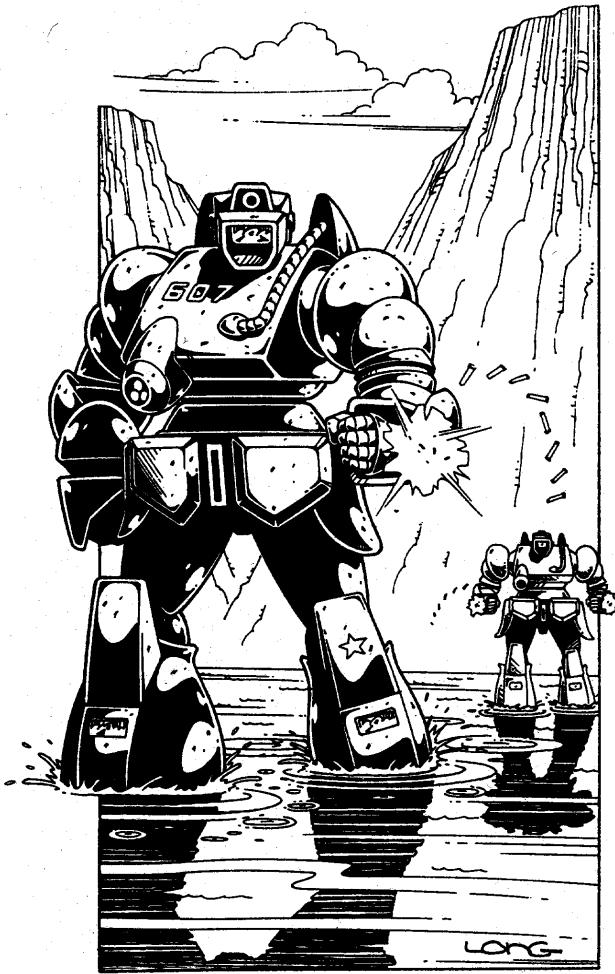
The gamers care little or nothing for schedules and convention chairpeople. They come to play games, and they will judge you by the quality of your game masters. The best game masters can be found by visiting other conventions and playing in their games yourself. Most GMs will be flattered if you invite them to your convention. The convention's staff will probably also include skilled GMs, and they deserve the chance to run games. Once you have picked these favorites, weed out the rest ruthlessly. Myriads of GMs will beg to run their games as soon as they hear of the convention, and a few may be worth inviting, but remember that it is always easier to locate new GMs than to find players for excess events.

Much of the convention's schedule will be developed by individual game masters. If you have any control over the games they offer, try to fill roughly half your slots with popular, tried-and-true games such as TSR's AD&D® game. The other half should be devoted to exotic events and games that the gamers might never get to play except at your convention. Seminars, workshops, and videotapes can be fascinating, but they often lose their participants to games. Large conventions sometimes offer an open gaming area where any gamer may run an unscheduled event. Unfortunately, this sometimes drains too many people from official games. Furthermore, open gaming attracts all the people who never get to GM because they are just not skilled enough.

A convention's games should not only be fun to play, they should generate a festive, carnival atmosphere. Encourage the use of miniatures and spectacular play aids. For example, the Maine Wargamers Society, which runs MAINE-CON, has redrawn the Avalon Hill Game Company's DIPLOMACY® board on a huge piece of poster paper, decorated it with coats-of-arms for each nation, and substituted realistic figurines for the game's usual counters. There is something stirring about tables of tanks, hexagon grids, and colorful Napoleonic cuirassiers. Furthermore, they give newspaper photographers something to photograph—which will attract people to your next convention.

Try to find some games that gamers may join at any time, so that when characters die in role-playing adventures, the players can still have fun. TRI-STATE-CON, in Cincinnati, holds a continual ACE OF ACES® tournament (by Nova Games) that players may enter and leave at will. At UMF-CON, we have a room of board games from which gamers may choose. Players may register for the board game room normally, but anyone who pays for another event and loses a character is allowed in free. One attendant watches the whole area and occasionally serves as an opponent.

*Continued on page 70*



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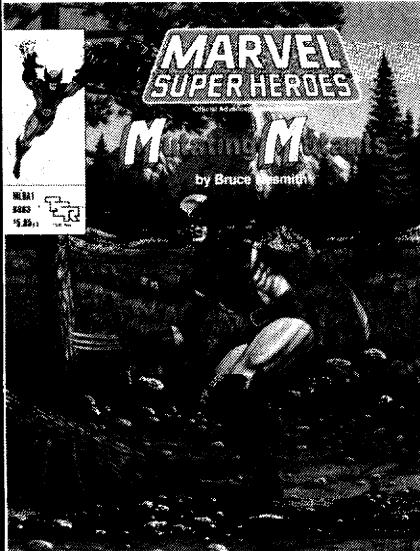
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## Pulling a "Con" Job

*Continued from page 67*

Miniatures games can also be used as "pick-up" events. Each side can have a set of units of used by new arrivals. Unused troops may be controlled by the Army Commander or left as idle reserves. Creative GMs might develop rationalizations for this. Certain German generals in Stalingrad and American commanders in Vietnam were notorious for flying into a battle, meddling with the strategy, then being airlifted away at crucial (and dangerous) moments.

A gamer who takes a prize home will remember your convention fondly. If you offer contests, game companies will often provide gift certificates as awards for winners of tournaments featuring their games. Medium-size publishers, who need your publicity but can afford to distribute free products, are usually the most helpful. Iron Crown Enterprises and Mayfair Games are especially interested in small conventions. When you give prizes, avoid awarding money or doing anything else which can be construed as gambling. Always be sure to indicate which events offer prizes in your program and to schedule plenty of noncompetitive role-playing adventures. One of role-playing's biggest attractions is that nobody "loses." Even in something as bloodthirsty as a war game, many gamers want the camaraderie of opposing teams in which the members all live or die together.

### Live role-playing

No other game matches the intensity of live-action adventuring. This is role-playing with a difference, in which the players actually do what their characters do and see what they see. Their mutual will to believe crushes all self-consciousness; players act like adventurers, not actors. Live role-playing requires extensive planning, superb GMs, and the numbers of participants which can only be found at conventions.

Try to place live-action games in a cozy area, with dim, flickering lights. In the shadowy light, players imagine all the vivid details that they cannot actually see. The equipment for live role-playing will be easy to find. Scraps of bright cloth can easily become tapestries; figurines, wooden ornaments, and many other items can evoke ancient pageantry; and lighting can be provided by flashlights hidden inside paper lanterns. All players should receive props to remind them that they are performing as fictional characters. Costumes work well to create this aura, and they can be very simple. For example, almost any piece of cloth or fur can become a cape. Note that capes make an ideal handout for a medieval game, since they are clearly archaic, can be worn by either sex, and hide modern clothing worn underneath. Do not schedule more than one live game for a single convention.

Since live role-playing works by a sort of mob psychology, you want to force everyone who might participate into the one live event: But note that if even one participant becomes tired of live role-playing and behaves disruptively, the whole event may be ruined.

If you can find some archaic recipes and a place to cook, a "medieval banquet" provides gamers with something to eat and a game at the same time. You can certainly charge extra for this sort of event. Health-food stores may sell primitive ingredients. A local chapter of the Society for Creative Anachronism might also give you some assistance.

It will be easier for live role-players to remember who their characters are and what they want if you pass out character sheets, like those used in traditional role-playing games. Although it may seem unrealistic for people to carry documents reminding them who they are, it is far worse when they need to ask. The character sheets should give the players goals and also list several potential allies or enemies to help participants meet other characters. It will take some time for the players to recognize each other, so encourage them to ask necessary questions—in character. Instead of saying, "Are you on my list of secret conspirators?", players might say "Pardon me—do we share an errand, perhaps?"

The most common mistake in live role-playing is in the choice of scenarios. Live games are weak where dice-and-paper games are strong—live-action cannot support swashbuckling quests. There is seldom enough space for long treks at conventions, and no safe way to simulate combat (though the Lazer Tag game may have made live modern/science-fiction war games more feasible). Instead, live games should foster conniving and detective-work. Choose a setting that makes violence impossible. One of the best scenarios, and certainly the most popular, tells characters that they are witnesses to a murder and must uncover the killer before someone accuses them. Many pre-packaged scenarios with this theme are available at hobby and toy shops.

One compromise between pure intrigue and fighting might be to assume that the players are all disarmed, but each commands henchmen or armies "offstage." For example, they might take the roles of diplomats and government ministers attending their leader as a coup d'état goes on outside. When players order their forces to fight, they give their orders to a game master who poses as some sort of messenger. The GM resolves combat outside the room, using standard war-game rules. Perhaps he might fire a cap pistol or create other sound effects. Later, the "messenger" reports the outcome.

The game master of a live role-playing game needs an extraordinary skill at manipulating crowds. First, he has to introduce the scenario without a boring

speech. The players will enjoy the game more if they get a chance to choose their characters, but the GM must ensure that they look like the people they are supposed to portray. Each character must have an exciting role in the story—but the role must be capable of being altered if no suitable player can be found. It is almost impossible to get exactly the right number or type of participants you want.

During the game, if players do not turn their conflicts into an exciting story or cannot move toward any resolution within the time allotted, the GM must subtly intervene. He cannot even rely on unexpected NPCs, since each character has to be a real person. Usually, the only "NPC" will be the GM himself. The GM must sense when the conflict reaches its climax and then end the game soon afterward. After the game, the GM should conduct a public debriefing. Everybody will want to know what their companions were really planning, and all players like to boast of their cunning tricks.

Costume contests are often popular, but have many drawbacks. There is a whole subculture of gamers and nongamers who specialize in costuming. Unfortunately, costumes make most nongamers vaguely nervous. The people who portray fantasy role-playing as a sinister cult can only be strengthened by pictures of bearded men dressed as druids and brandishing sculpted Indonesian daggers. It's best that you ban weapons and military paraphernalia. It is natural for gamers to try to outdo each other's costumes, and if weapons are allowed, a sort of arms race will cause real swords to drive out cardboard replicas. If anyone is injured, you will get disastrous publicity—and possibly lawsuits.

### After the convention

When the convention is over, make sure that your sponsors will welcome another one. Clean the convention site and replace anything that has been damaged. Thank the people who participated, and consider presenting small gifts to anyone who was particularly helpful. When you pick directors for your next convention, try to keep at least one of the old chairpeople and select one new chair. This way, somebody will always know what to expect, but you can eventually train your entire staff to run conventions on their own.

If your convention did not attract reporters, write your own articles on it and submit them to local papers. These are more likely to be printed if you represent yourself as an interested citizen, not as a convention promoter. Editors especially like stories with interesting black-and-white photographs. When dealing with reporters or writing news articles, remember that most newspaper readers are not gamers. Therefore, describe the games as simple adventures, easy to play.

*Continued on page 78*



## An empath and an apprentice

by Dale A. Donovan

I'm baaaack. The first thing I must do this month is to thank everyone who wrote in with comments and suggestions for the new "MARVEL-Phile." The amount of mail I received forced me to roll on the Stun table, but I made my roll. Thank you all for your input. You will be seeing some of your suggestions in upcoming months.

There are two areas on which I received quite a few questions, so I thought I'd take the time to address them now. Several people asked why there was no "MARVEL-Phile" in issues #157 or #158, and just how often would the column appear in the future? In May, I decided to take the month off from doing the column, and this column was originally slated to appear in the June issue, but a lack of time on my part and space in the magazine pushed

# THE MARVEL®-PHILE

the column back to this issue. I plan for the column to appear bi-monthly, so you can look for another one in issue #161.

I also received quite a bit of mail from those who disagreed with some of my ideas on attributes and Powers. The perfect example of this is Captain Britain. *The Official Handbook of the MARVEL UNIVERSE®*, Update '89, stated that Cap was able to press 90 tons. In the game, that qualifies as Unearthly Strength, so that is the rank I gave him. I do use the *Handbook* as well as the comics themselves for my sources, so I have reasons for assigning the ranks I do. But if you disagree with my decisions on Cap or any character, that's okay. If you want Cap to only have Incredibile Strength in your campaign, go ahead. It is your game, after all.

This month, I'll discuss two of Doctor Strange's right-hand beings: the empath Topaz, and Doc's current apprentice, Rintrah.



## TOPAZ™ Empath

F	TY (6)	Health: 42
A	GD (10)	
S	TY (6)	Karma: 90
E	EX (20)	
R	GD (10)	Resources: TY (6)
I	IN (40)	
P	IN (40)	Popularity: 3

**POWERS:** Topaz has numerous psychic powers, the full extent of which are not known at this time. She has the potential to be one of the most powerful psychics on Earth, and has demonstrated extraordinary abilities in times of crisis during her life. As all of her abilities are psychic, they utilize Topaz's Incredible Psyche as their Power rank.

**Telepathy:** Topaz can perform the Mental Probe Power Stunt as well as normal Telepathy.

**Psionic Attack:** Topaz possesses this power at Incredible rank for range and intensity.

**Empathy:** Topaz is also an empath, able to read the emotions of others.

**Emotion Control:** Topaz can instill or drain emotions from people. Although she can influence multiple targets (in the same area she is in), she can work with only one emotion at a time.

**Telekinesis:** Topaz is also able to use this power at Incredible range and intensity.

**Healing:** Topaz can heal damage to herself and others, using her Psyche score to replace the subject's Endurance. She can heal any number of subjects once per day. Her abilities are such that she can even reunite a person's soul with his body, if the two should become separated.

**HISTORY:** Topaz has no knowledge of her parents or even if Topaz is her real name. Her first memories are of growing up as a street urchin in India. When war broke out, she was placed in a prison camp where she met the sorcerer, Taboo. It was under Taboo's tutelage that Topaz discovered her powers, and she subsequently used them to help Taboo and herself escape from the camp.

As Topaz grew to adulthood, she acted as a familiar for Taboo and his sorcery. They eventually moved to take up residence in southern California. At one point, Taboo tried to force Jack Russell (the Werewolf; see DRAGON® issue #126, "A MARVEL® Monster-Phile") to hand over to Taboo a book of black magic known as the Darkhold (see issue #126, "The MARVEL-Phile"). Neither Russell nor his family possessed the book, and Taboo ordered Topaz to kill Jack Russell. Sensing the goodness within Jack, Topaz refused. Taboo then ordered Russell and Topaz out of his home.

Topaz was soon attacked by Taboo, who stole a portion of her soul for arcane purposes. Taboo was killed soon thereafter, and the missing portion of Topaz's soul returned to her. She subsequently moved in with Russell and his family, and she and Jack fell in love, but neither ever acknowledged the extent of their feelings. It was not long thereafter that Topaz and Russell traveled to Transylvania to visit one of Russell's relatives, and they came into conflict with the master vampire himself, Dracula (see issue #126, "The MARVEL-Phile").

Topaz's powers began to fade after this, and she returned to India in an attempt to restore them. There she encountered a sorcerer, Doctor Glitternight, who put her

into a trance and removed the "dark side" of her soul. Topaz fainted, but later recovered to the point where at least some of her abilities returned. Glitternight took his portion of Topaz's soul and infused it with black magical energy from his own body, then transformed the whole into a beast that would do his bidding. Topaz returned to California with Glitternight's monster trailing her. Upon discovering it, Jack Russell changed into his werewolf shape to fight and destroy the beast.

Still later, Glitternight returned and transformed Topaz into a winged harpy-like being under his control. Topaz's true personality reasserted itself, though, and she returned to her human form. Glitternight later vanished as a result of a mystical battle with another being.

Many months later, the demon Mephisto transported Topaz to his dimension and informed her that on her upcoming 21st birthday her powers would reach their peak. She would be so powerful, he told her, that she would even be able to destroy Mephisto himself. As Mephisto tried to kill her, Topaz gained full control over her powers and unleashed energy that ripped Mephisto apart.

Mephisto eventually reformed himself and sent his demonic minions after Topaz. They overpowered her and cast a spell upon her that would remove the portion of her soul that contained her powers, were she ever to escape. The demons then placed her within bedrock to imprison her physical body. It was here that she spent her 21st birthday.

Later, Topaz's physical body was released by an energy outburst from another of Mephisto's captives, Franklin Richards. The now rock-encrusted form of Topaz made its way to Earth, where it battled Earth's Sorcerer Supreme, Doctor Strange. Realizing that a human was trapped within this form, Strange released Topaz and brought her to his home in New York City, but she was now missing the empathetic portion of her soul, as per the demons' spell. Topaz had trouble controlling her own emotions as well, and her sanity suffered. (It is unclear whether the missing portion of her soul was the same portion that Glitternight stole. There is no clear evidence that Topaz regained the portion that Glitternight stole, even after Jack Russell destroyed the beast that Glitternight created with it.)

The alien sorcerer, Urthona, captured the missing portion of her soul and sought to use it and Topaz as part of his scheme to kill Doctor Strange and become the Sorcerer Supreme himself. To this end, he contacted Topaz, showed her what he possessed, and offered to return her soul to her if she betrayed Doctor Strange. In her unstable frame of mind, Topaz agreed,

allowing Urthona to transport Strange's home and all his mystical talismans to Urthona's home planet. There, Urthona took both Topaz and Strange's servant, Wong, prisoner.

Strange, who was wounded in one of Urthona's attacks, now shared the body of the being known as Rintrah (see below) and journeyed to Urthona's planet. During the ensuing mystical battle, the bottle containing Topaz's lost soul was broken, and Topaz's powers returned to her in full. Urthona was defeated, and Strange, Rintrah, Wong, and Topaz returned to Earth.

More recently, Topaz traveled to Britain and became involved with the mystic Sisters of Glastonbury Tor, the descendants of those women who had cared for King Arthur after his final confrontation with Modred. The Sisters tried to instruct Topaz in the use of her great powers. Topaz has subsequently returned to New York, the outcome of her instruction unknown. Whole once more, Topaz continues to be a staunch ally of Doctor Strange, Wong, and Rintrah.

**Role-playing Notes:** In your campaign, Topaz might appear when she is on an errand or mission for Doctor Strange. Despite her powers, Strange would not send her on what he considered to be an overly dangerous mission. Topaz is not a hero in the typical sense; she does not put on a costume and fight villains. She is a background character, using her mental abilities and her healing to help others (heroes included). She could appear and save a dying hero, then ask for his help with *her* mission.

### RINTRAH™ Apprentice

F	GD (10)	Health: 80
A	GD (10)	Karma: 60
S	RM (30)	Resources: PR (4)
E	RM (30)	
R	GD (10)	
I	EX (20)	
P	RM (30)	Popularity: 0

**POWERS:** At present, Rintrah has the ability to perform only a handful of magical feats. He does qualify as a Disciple of the Order School of Magic, and he has the potential to become a great sorcerer, especially if he remains a student of the Sorcerer Supreme, Doctor Strange.

As with Roma (issue #155), Rintrah's magical powers are given in a format compatible with MHAC9, *Realms of Magic*. If you do not own this supplement, simply treat each spell as a mystical Power operating at the same rank.

**Mastery Level:** Disciple of the Order School of Magic

#### Personal

**Alteration—Appearance:** Remarkable (30).

**Astral Projection:** Good (10).

**Shield—Individual:** Excellent (20).

#### Universal

**Eldritch Bolts** (Bolt of Bedevilment): Excellent (20).

#### Dimensional

**Dimensional Aperture:** Excellent (20).

**HISTORY:** Rintrah is a sentient, other-dimensional being who is sensitive to the presence of magical forces and has the potential to become a powerful sorcerer. Through unknown circumstances, Rintrah became the apprentice of the other dimensional sorcerer known as Enitharmon the Weaver. It was during this time that Doctor Strange first encountered Rintrah. Strange took his magical Cloak of Levitation, which had been damaged in battle, to be repaired by Enitharmon. After the repairs were made, Enitharmon bade Rintrah to return Strange's cloak to him, back on Earth.

Rintrah encountered Strange not long after Strange's body had been gravely wounded by a servant of the alien sorcerer, Urthona. Rintrah returned the cloak and gave his permission for Strange's astral form (as per the spell) to enter his body. The two consciousnesses now sharing Rintrah's body took Strange's own healing body, borrowed a starship from Reed Richards, and traveled to Urthona's planet. Here, Rintrah/Strange battled and defeated Urthona, thereby releasing his captives, Wong and Topaz. They all then returned to Earth.

Rintrah subsequently accompanied Strange on a few of his exploits, then returned to Enitharmon. Recently, however, Rintrah has returned to Earth and has asked Strange to take him on as an apprentice. Strange agreed, and Rintrah has taken up residence in Strange's home in New York City.

**Role-playing Notes:** Rintrah would most likely appear in a campaign accompanied by Doctor Strange or while on a mission for his mentor. Rintrah is the type of being who might well bite off more than he could chew with regard to villains. Somewhat headstrong, he could get himself into a situation where he might need help from the heroes. He's not afraid to mix it up in melee; his Strength serves him well in this instance.



One other item of interest is the fact that *The Gamer's Handbook to the MARVEL UNIVERSE*, Vol. 6, should be in your stores by the time you read this. Pick it up and get lots of new characters and updates of some of your old favorites.

That's it for now. If you have any comments or suggestions for this column, send them to: The MARVEL-Phile, DRAGON Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.

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# RHYTHM WARRIORS

Martial arts  
beyond Kara-Tur:  
**the battle dancer**

by Joseph R. Ravitts



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Many players brought into an AD&D® 1st Edition *Oriental Adventures* campaign will never again accept a game world without martial arts. After playing a monk or a kensai, players see combat without consideration for sophisticated techniques as stumble-bum affairs. As a result, some DMs use all of the *Oriental Adventures* character classes in every imagined world and country, not merely the Kara-Tur setting or its equivalent. However, there is an alternative. Characters can go to a wholly different continent having nothing of an Oriental nature, yet still having martial arts—but martial arts of a unique nature. A study of real-world history yields examples of systematized fighting styles worthy of comparison to the Asian methods yet completely independent in origin. Perhaps the best example comes out of Africa, by way of South America.

During the colonial era, many black slaves escaped from Portuguese masters in Brazil to form communities hidden in the jungle. To defend themselves against white pursuers or hostile Indians, the former slaves developed a style of fighting based on the combat methods of their African ancestors. This came to be known as *capoeira* (pronounced cop-WAY-rah), and its practitioners are *capoeiristas*. A new NPC class is offered here, based on the *capoeiristas* (whose art is still practiced today) but using the simpler name of *battle dancer*.

The most distinctive features of *capoeira* are its highly acrobatic nature (including handsprings and spinning like a top on one's head) and the fact that all its techniques are learned and practiced to music—music that has served to pass along the oral traditions of the displaced Africans who devised the system. Regardless of whether or not battle dancers are conceived of as living anything like the fugitive-slave existence of the original *capoeiristas*, this cultural flavor and a strong sense of community solidarity are essential to the class.

To make a quasi-African zero-level NPC into a battle dancer, there must be a *capoeira* circle for his training. This circle consists of five or more battle dancers standing in a ring, simultaneously demonstrating movements and singing *capoeira* songs, while close at hand are two or more other persons (who can, at need, be noncombatant members of their community) playing musical instruments. The *capoeira* circle not only provides training but can (as will be described later) confer on its participants a sort of collective magical-clerical ability. This gives the battle dancers' villages a fighting chance of survival in a world that ruthlessly demands the use of spells to deal with some perils, yet without having any of the familiar spell-casting types present. In this way, normal PC types are just as strange to the battle dancers as the battle dancers are to the PCs. At the same time, though their survival as a group is promoted, no single

battle-dancer character is outrageously unbeatable.

When creating the tropical territory in which far-traveling PCs can encounter battle dancers, it is suggested that any one battle-dancer village be part of a confederation of three or more such villages, and that there be several separate confederations in the region. If there are cities in the area, there could be some urbanized battle dancers as well.

Note that battle dancers can serve both as warriors and spell-casters, but they are not as flexible as the specialized classes can be. In a *capoeira* culture, almost no other classes will be found. It is possible that a *capoeira* culture having contact with other parts of the world might find its old ways eroding under the influence of the outside world, with some hostility between the generations that practice either the battle-dancing ways or the "new" and more specialized ways.

### Battle dancer statistics

A battle dancer must have a strength of not less than 14, a dexterity not less than 14, a constitution not less than 12, and a **combined** intelligence and wisdom not less than 17. Any charisma score is allowable, but an individual with charisma lower than 8 will never rise above 9th level. A battle dancer gains no bonus for exceptional ability scores, nor can he ever have a second class. Table 1 shows most of the relevant information on the class's abilities. This class is patterned after the monk of the 1st Edition *Players Handbook*.

Battle dancers have six-sided hit dice, with two dice at 1st level. Those of this class must be human, and they use the combat and saving-throw tables of fighters. Weapons usable by them are axes (hand), blowguns, clubs, daggers, darts, javelins, knives, spears, swords (one-handed), and any sort of stick (bo or jo) or staff. Oil and poison cannot be used as weapons. One weapon is learned at 1st level (with a new weapon gained every two levels thereafter), and a nonproficiency penalty of -3 applies to the use of unfamiliar weapons. Though they do not use armor, they can use shields, but while doing so they forfeit the use of their special unarmed attacks. Any magical weapon or shield can be used by a battle dancer within the above restrictions, as well as any magical item that can be used by any character class and (as is described later) certain magical musical instruments.

Due to their wilderness life, these characters must choose their first four non-weapon proficiencies gained at 1st level from the lists in either *Oriental Adventures* (page 15, under "jungle barbarians," excluding armorer, chanting, dancing, and music) or *the Wilderness Survival Guide* (page 12, excluding charioteering, mountaineering, riding, and cold or desert survival). All proficiencies chosen must be appropriate to the campaign environment. One new nonweapon proficiency is earned

for every two levels after the 1st.

The majority of battle dancers are of neutral-good alignment: morally good because the survival value of cooperation has taught them to cherish love and loyalty; philosophically neutral because, while a hatred for slavery inclines them away from excessive lawfulness, the discipline of *capoeira* equally inclines them away from chaos. No battle dancer can be of an evil alignment, as slavery, woe, and treachery are opposed to all of a battle dancer's beliefs.

Just as monks gain special abilities with advances in rank, so do battle dancers acquire abilities relating to the power of music. They improve in movement speed and inherent armor class much as monks do, and they inflict increasing amounts of damage (to human-size foes only) with their fists and feet. Because *capoeira* differs from any fighting method that most characters will have ever seen, its practitioners have a chance to completely surprise opponents with their handspringing kicks, flying takedowns, and other movements (see Table 2). Monks, ninja, and sohei have less chance than others of being thus surprised, and no such person will be caught off-guard by battle dancers more than once.

The surprise attack against a non-battle dancer foe is rolled for at the start of combat, regardless of which antagonist is the aggressor—unless the combat began with a successful surprise attack by the non-battle dancer foe. In that case, the battle dancer will get his chance at the very start of the second round. A successful attack for the battle dancer means that his opponent automatically suffers the maximum damage that the battle dancer is able to deliver by kick or punch (unless the opponent's armor class is 4 or better, in which case a normal damage roll is made). Thereafter, the battle dancer can either break off and retreat, or else make a regular attack at +1 to hit probability before the opponent can act again.

Battle dancers have many special abilities. These include the following:

They can perform the martial-arts special maneuver Instant Stand automatically, a talent that takes up no special-maneuver slot and can be performed at any level (see *Oriental Adventures*, page 104).

They can each sing, dance, and play 1-2 musical instruments, as per the appropriate nonweapon proficiencies, well enough to earn a modest living as an entertainer in a city.

In brawls involving no weapons, a battle dancer's adversary does not gain attack initiative if he charges to attack. Also, while brawling, the battle dancer gains a +2 bonus to his armor class against unarmed combatants, thanks to acrobatics.

The traditional songs of the *capoeira* culture, describing the exploits of gods, goddesses, and heroes, have beneficial effects on members of this class. Any battle dancer hearing these songs sung by

a colleague of 6th level or higher will be immune to all fear for the duration of the singing.

The radius in which a battle dancer's singing or instrument playing has a beneficial effect on others of this class equals 10' per level of the singer or musician. The battle dancer's voice will carry beyond this radius, but special abilities such as those listed here are more limited in effect.

A 2nd-level battle dancer (Handstander), while hearing the singing of a 6th- or higher-level colleague, gains a +2 on saving throws against *psionic blasts* and all enchantment/charm spells and those powers involving mental control.

A 3rd-level Handwalker, hearing capoeira songs sung by a 6th-level battle dancer, gains the same benefits he would gain from a *chant* spell. The *chant* spell can work cumulatively with the capoeira song after a one-round delay in which the battle dancer who is singing adapts his song to blend with the cleric's chanting.

A 4th level Handspringer is immune to harpy songs and the bards musical *charm*. Also (due to their skills at team actions), if two or more 4th- or higher-level battle dancers fight side by side, each gets a +1 bonus in armor class.

At 5th level, a Headspinner can move silently, hide in shadows, and hear noises as a 1st-level thief; these abilities progress with rank. Also, if two or three battle dancers of this level or higher team up against a single opponent (which battle dancers of good alignment will not do unless the necessity is great), one member of this team per round (selected randomly) gains an extra attack.

A 6th-level Rhythm Warrior is able to benefit lower-level brethren by his singing, as previously noted; however, he cannot do so while personally engaged in melee. It is also at 6th level that he becomes able to give qualified zero-level characters the instruction in music and movement that will turn them into 1st-level battle dancers. Moreover, the Rhythm Warrior can handle a magical bardic instrument without suffering harm and, given 2-7 days to study such an instrument, has a 15% chance of being able to use it as a bard might. (This chance goes up another 15% with each level gained, so that a 9th-level battle dancer is 60% likely to master any musical magic item he acquires.) Finally, the Rhythm Warrior is surprised only on a 1 in 6.

The Dancing Warrior, level 7, receives *chant* spell benefits when he hears any music not of a definitely hostile nature. If his fellows are singing, regardless of their levels, the Dancing Warrior gains double the *chant* benefit from hearing them.

The Singing Warrior, level 8, is able to sing with benefit to all colleagues while he is fighting, and he can be heard even through a magical *silence* spell or effect.

The 9th-level Music Warrior enjoys a special importance in the capoeira hierarchy. For a 5th-level battle dancer to make

the passage to 6th level, he must spend a day having his musical skills examined by a 9th- or higher-level battle dancer. There is a 10% chance for every wisdom point of the candidate less than 18 that the Music Warrior will have to give an extra 1-8 days of musical coaching before the candidate is promoted.

The Contra-Master, level 10, acquires an added point of charisma upon reaching this rank. He cannot now be surprised except by opponent using magical spells or powers such as *teleportation* or *ethereality*. Also, any 1st- or 2nd-level battle dancer who observes a Contra-Master serving as a practice sparring-partner for a Master (10th-level or above) will enjoy a 10% bonus on any experience points he may earn in the following week.

The 11th-level Master of Equilibrium is immune to all mental attacks (including all enchantment/charm spells, possessions, and attempts at mind reading, mind control, and psionic assault), as long as he or another Master is singing. If another battle dancer or a noncombatant member of their community has been *charmed*, *hypnotized*, etc., the Master's song will act as a *dispel magic* against this influence. Furthermore, the Master can *know alignment* of any being heard singing—regardless of such disguising powers as *misdirection* or *aura alteration*.

The 12th-level Uncle of Masters (a female holding this rank would be called Mother, not Aunt, since these titles derive from the matrilineal system of many African cultures) is immune to all *death magic* (including the monk's *quivering palm*) as long as he or a colleague of Master rank is singing. Also, the Uncle of Masters is able to teach allied non-battle dancers to sing capoeira songs well enough to confer benefits on battle-dancer listeners. Such teaching takes a number of weeks equal to 30 minus the student's wisdom score.

The Great-Uncle (or Grandmother) of Masters, level 13, gains an overall 25% magic resistance from sheer will-force as long as any battle dancer can be heard singing or playing a musical instrument. Moreover, if any mortal character of evil alignment uses *ESP* or *telepathy* on the Great-Uncle of Masters, the innate gracefulness and beauty of the mind being read will require the mind-reader to save vs. spells or change alignment to that of the Great-Uncle. (Evil extraplanar creatures reading a Great-Uncle's mind will not change alignment, but they will temporarily forget their evil intentions, initiating no hostilities for 2-5 rounds.)

**Combat skills:** When a battle dancer ranks high enough to make more than one attack per round, the number of attacks made is the same whether he uses a weapon or not. If a shield is also used, no unarmed techniques can be used and the battle dancer's number of attacks must be referenced on the table at the top of the next column:

Battle dancer's level	Weapon attacks per melee round
1-5	1/1
6-10	3/2
11+ 11+	2/1

When armed but shieldless, the character can choose how many of his attacks will employ his weapon and how many will employ a foot, fist, or elbow. If an armed but shieldless battle dancer is fighting humanoid foes only, then once in any combat, after two rounds of using only unarmed attacks, the battle dancer can make a feint with his weapon (causing no damage), followed by an unarmed attack that enjoys a +4 bonus to hit because of the feint. If this sneak attack succeeds, it does double normal damage and can be followed up with a weapon attack at +2 to hit against the foe. Monks, ninja, and sohei are less susceptible to this strategy, so the unarmed portion of the above tactic has a +2 to-hit bonus and does only normal damage, while the armed follow-up has but a +1 bonus to hit.

**Rising in rank:** There is less exclusivity and conflict involved in battle-dancer level gains than in those for monks. Up through level 9, there is no limit on how many characters may hold each rank. The only limit on the number of Contra-Masters (level 10) is that, in any one capoeira culture, the number of Masters of Equilibrium (level 11) cannot exceed the number of Contra-Masters, lest a Master be without a Contra-Master sparring partner to keep him in practice. This is important, because a major function of Contra-Masters in the capoeira culture is to keep Masters in mental and physical condition. Any Master who fails to work out with a Contra-Master at least one a week while not adventuring will gain only one-half normal experience credit for the next adventure he undertakes. A Master who passes a full year without working out or adventuring—not counting the ordinary hunting of common game—will *drop* a level in rank.

Thus, if a community has Masters and Contra-Masters in equal number, any promotion-eligible Contra-Masters will just have to wait until two or more Music Warriors climb to Contra-Master rank, unless there exists another capoeira community of friendly alignment that has an extra Contra-Master available for transfer. For this reason, many Contra-Masters will take Music Warriors out on frequent adventures so that one Music Warrior, rising to fill a Contra-Master's post, will free that Contra-Master to seek his own promotion to Master. In such a case, the former Music Warrior usually becomes the sparring partner of the former Contra-Master who helped him to rise in rank.

The promotion from Contra-Master to Master involves combat, but no one is *demoted* thereby. In fact, it is not against the Master of Equilibrium that the Contra-

Master fights, but against any of these combinations of opponents, in order of preference: two fellow Contra-Masters, in immediate succession; one fellow Contra-Master, followed by fighting two Singing Warriors simultaneously after a brief rest; or a Singing Warrior and two Dancing Warriors simultaneously on one day, followed by fighting two Music Warriors in immediate succession the next day. These combats are fought unarmed and to the accompaniment of capoeira music (performed by Masters where possible) from which both sides draw benefit. Damage is treated as subdual damage, not killing damage. Once the would-be Master has passed the trial by combat, he spends 2-5 days composing an original capoeira song (a creative opportunity for any DM with musical or poetic talent). Upon performing this song for the community and teaching it to enough people to use it in a capoeira circle, the character is initiated as a Master of Equilibrium.

The promotion to Uncle/Mother of Masters is conducted in a somewhat more monklike fashion. There can be only one active Uncle of Masters in any capoeira community. The eligible Master fights the reigning Uncle (as with monkish promotion, the challenger here temporarily acquires powers equal to the incumbent). If the challenger loses, he drops in experience points to the minimum number for a Master of Equilibrium. If the challenger defeats the Uncle of Masters, the loser does not drop in rank, but the defeated Uncle of Master must do one of three things, as decided by the victorious new Uncle of Masters. First, he can go into semi-retirement, occupied mainly with noncombatant activities like song composing. (In this case, the defeated Uncle's fighting ability will drop one level after a year, and another level every six months thereafter; but if and when the successor Uncle goes on to achieve the topmost rank in capoeira, the ex-Uncle, if less than 60

years old, can resume normal activity and work upward in level again). Second, he can leave the community, accompanied only by two or three high-level followers and their families, to found a new settlement not less than two days' travel away. Third, he can remain in the old settlement with a similar handful of companions (plus anyone unfit for travel), while the new Uncle of Masters leads the majority of the villagers away to found a new community in some desirable location.

The Great-Uncle/Grandmother of Masters is like the monkish Grand Master of Flowers in that there can be only one holder of this title per region. However, the highly artistic and fraternal nature of capoeira makes it feel inappropriate to decide possession of the top rank merely by the outcome of a slugfest. Two alternate methods of filling the position are suggested, both operating on the assumption that the Great-Uncle holds lifetime tenure and that a contest for this rank can

**Table 1**  
**Battle Dancer Experience and Skills**

Level	Title	6-sided hit dice	Inherent AC	Move	No. of attacks	Unarmed damage	Experience points
1	Tumbler	2	9	14"	1	1-3	0-2,500
2	Handstander	3	9	15"	1	1-4	2,501-4,750
3	Handwalker	4	8	16"	1	1-6	4,751-9,000
4	Handspringer	5	8	17"	5/4	2-8	9,001-17,500
5	Headspinner	6	7	18"	5/4	2-12	17,501-40,000
6	Rhythm Warrior	7	7	19"	4/3	2-16	40,001-80,000
7	Dancing Warrior	8	6	20"	4/3	4-16	80,001-160,000
8	Singing Warrior	9	6	21"	3/2	3-18	160,001-320,000
9	Music Warrior	10	5	22"	2	2-20	320,001-600,000
10	Contra-Master	11	4	24"	5/2	3-24	600,001-900,000
11	Master of Equilibrium	12	3	25"	3	4-24	900,001-1,200,000
12	Uncle/Mother of Masters	13	2	26"	4	3-20	1,200,001-2,000,000
13	Great-Uncle/Grandmother of Masters	14	1	27"	9/2	4-32	2,000,001+

**Table 2**  
**Surprise Attack Success Probability**

Level of battle dancer	vs. non-martial-artist who never saw capoeira combat before	vs. non-martial-artist who has seen capoeira once before	vs. ninja, sohei, or monk of same or lower level	vs. ninja, sohei, or monk of higher level
1	2 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
2	5 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
3	10 %	1 %	0 %	0 %
4	15 %	5 %	0 %	0 %
5	25 %	10 %	1 %	0 %
6	35 %	20 %	5 %	0 %
7	45 %	30 %	10 %	1 %
8	55 %	40 %	15 %	5 %
9	65 %	50 %	20 %	10 %
10	80 %	65 %	25 %	15 %
11	90 %	75 %	30 %	20 %
12	95 %	85 %	35 %	25 %
13	99 %	90 %	40 %	30 %

occur only when he dies or retires:

1. All candidates are told by their gods in a vision to undertake some quest beneficial to the order of battle dancers as a whole. The one who best fulfills the mission becomes the Great-Uncle/Grandmother of Masters. As all battle dancers are NPCs, the DM can decide the winner of this contest with a single die roll. Simpler yet, just arbitrarily create a character who is assumed to have accomplished the quest or will meet the PCs as he is pursuing it.

2. All candidates must compose new capoeira songs, to be judged by the old Great-Uncle (if living) or by an assembly of all Masters of Equilibrium; the best song earns the promotion. This would be very much in the capoeira spirit. Again, if compressing the process is desirable, one die roll or DM's fiat would settle the contest.

#### The capoeira circle

What follows is a typical set of capoeira-circle spell-like powers, which the DM may modify from one confederation or alignment to another:

If the leader of a capoeira circle is of Rhythm Warrior level or above, the songs of that circle can, once a day, render a nonmagical weapon temporarily able to damage weapon-resistant monsters. This weapon will gain no to-hit or damage bonuses, but it can hurt all monsters re-

gardless of the magical bonuses usually required to hit them. The duration of this power in combat is a number of rounds equal to the experience level of the circle's leader, plus the number of other battle dancers who joined in singing over the weapon. If not used immediately, the weapon will hold its special power for a time equal to the circle leader's charisma times 12 hours. A circle with a Master leading can empower two weapons per day; with an Uncle of Masters, a weapon can remain empowered for twice as long as usual; and a Great-Uncle of Masters can, over his lifetime, permanently empower a number of weapons equal to his wisdom score. (The DM can decide whether the song-enchanted weapons will work equally well for all wielders or for only battle dancers.)

With a Dancing Warrior or above as leader, the circle can cast (once each per day) a "half-strength" version of *cure disease* and *neutralize poison* spells—that is, the victim's life will be saved, but he will need time to recuperate. With a Contra-Master or above as leader, these spell effects will be of full clerical quality.

With a Singing Warrior or above as leader, the circle can cast *remove curse* and *control weather*.

With a Music Warrior or above as leader, *dispel magic* can be cast.

With a Contra-Master or above, *strength*

can be cast on all in the circle.

With a Master leading, *dispel evil, exorcise, heal*, and *tongues* spells can be cast.

Once a year, with an Uncle of Masters leading, the circle can invoke the direct aid of some powerful creature such as a lammasu or baku. With a Great-Uncle of Masters, the ceremony can be done twice a year.

#### Battle dancers and others

If player characters of non-Oriental types happen upon battle dancers, they should not find these NPCs *too* terribly astonishing—at least, not if they've ever seen thief-acrobats before. But *Oriental Adventure* types may be very taken aback by them—not because of their surprise attacks or techniques, but because—realizing battle dancers to be a kind of martial artist—Oriental-type characters will expect battle dancers to act like denizens of Kara-Tur . . . and the battle dancers will not do so.

Members of the capoeira culture, even ones of lawful alignment, are cheerfully indifferent to many of an Oriental character's concerns for honor and "face." In particular, a samurai's readiness to commit seppuku will strike battle dancers as ridiculous, since a man who throws away his own life is depriving family and friends of his help and protection. And an Oriental character who tries to engage a battle dancer in a psychic duel is likely to achieve no greater result than having the battle dancer ask him, "Are you feeling ill?"

Whether visited by "Eastern" or "Western" player characters, these "Third World" martial artists should serve to lend color to a far-ranging campaign—and force adventuring parties to stay on their toes, or else land on their backs.  $\Omega$

#### Pulling a "Con" Job

*Continued from page 70*

As a final note, naming conventions is actually a form of poetry. Like the sonnet and haiku, convention names are wonderful because of the information which can be expressed within such strict limitations. I personally admire names such as PELICON, CON-FUSION, CON-TEMPLATION, and especially GENGHIS-CON. Our Table Gaming Club decided to flatter the Powers That Be and name our convention UMF-CON, for the University of Maine in Farmington. Function triumphs over form once more.

I want to thank Lori Buck, Michael Griffin, Elizabeth Mauzy, Michael McDonald, Randy Carsten, Martin Meader, Linda White, Jeannine Petriel, and the rest of the Table Gaming Club for figuring all this out, and Peter Rice's Maine Wargamers Association for bringing MAINE-CON to UMF. Thanks also to Lonnie Barnett of TRI-STATE-CON and to Keith Polster of BOARSHEAD MID-SUMMER REVEL for outside advice.

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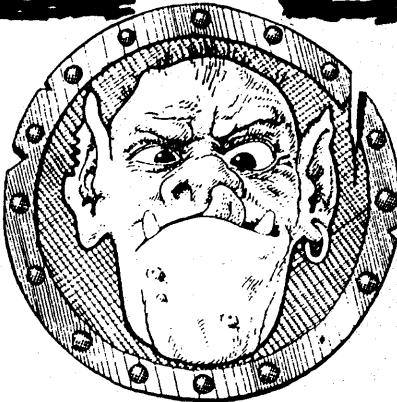
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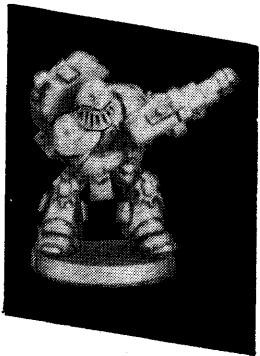
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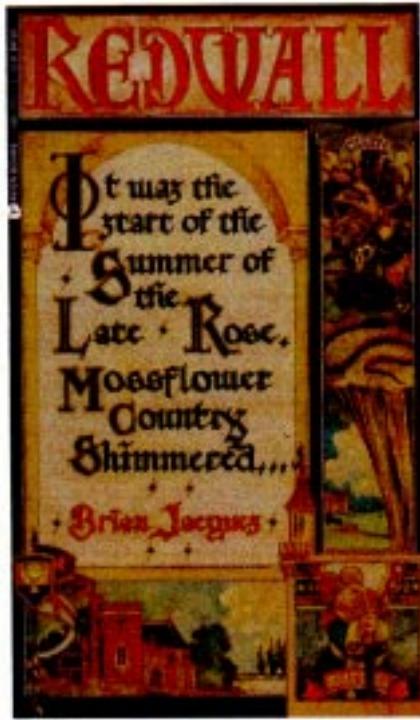
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**WIZARDS of LAW**

# The ROLE of Books

Sunrunners, Wolfwalkers, and one-eyed rats

©1990 by John C. Bunnell



## REDWALL

**Brian Jacques**

**Avon 0-380-70827-2 \$4.50**

One of the two bookstores I visit most often keeps *Redwall* in the science-fiction/fantasy section; the other has it shelved with the children's books. Either choice is defensible. Author Brian Jacques has written the sort of novel that can be read either as a memorable bedtime story or as a wise and adventurous epic with surprising and understated maturity.

*Redwall* Abbey is a medieval country gathering place, home, and cultural center for those living for miles around. In Jacques' world, it's quite unremarkable that its proprietors are mice, that a badger is its chief security officer, or that a variety of other small woodland creatures look to Redwall for sanctuary and protection. That protection is tested severely, how-

ever, when a fearsome troop of invaders arrives under the leadership of Cluny the Scourge, a huge one-eyed rat whose tail is tipped with a poison-treated steel barb. Only the restless young Matthias is able to rouse Redwall to mount a defense, and only Matthias may be able to track down a legendary sword which may be instrumental in Cluny's defeat.

Jacques successfully treads a razor-thin balance in portraying his animal characters, treating them all as people while not losing the flavor of their animal natures. Asmodeus the serpent, Basil the hare, and white owl Captain Snow are especially distinctive, and Jacques' frenzied characterization of a loft full of sparrows is neatly contrasted with the relatively placid abbey below. And unlike many writers of animal literature, he has a sure grasp of his characters' relative sizes, giving his battles a startlingly authentic feel.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the one weak point is the apparent connection between Matthias and a long-ago mouse known as Martin the Warrior whose tapestry portrait hangs in Redwall. The link is vague at best, and the riddle-poem that sends Matthias in search of the missing sword relies on an implausible, forced anagram for much of its impact. But this single tenuous thread isn't significant enough to unravel Jacques' otherwise extraordinary weaving. *Redwall* offers one of the best animals-eye views of a world I've seen in quite some time, and it offers younger readers an ideal bridge between Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and the realms of so-called "adult" fantasy.

## SUNRUNNER'S FIRE

**Melanie Rawn**

**DAW 0-88677-403-9 \$4.95**

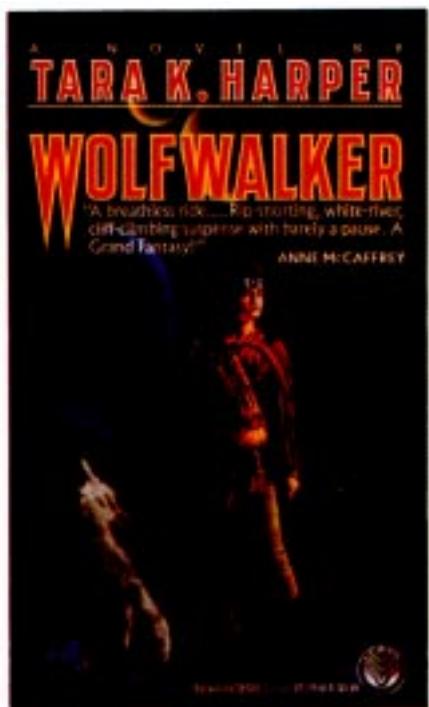
The third massive book in Melanie Rawn's "Dragon Prince" series presents a real problem. Others have noted, correctly, that the Dragon Prince novels are obsessed with complexity and are longer on hand-wringing than they are on adventure. But *Sunrunner's Fire* accomplishes one feat that almost makes it required reading: It transforms one of Rawn's major characters from nominal protagonist to full-fledged villain in completely believable fashion.

The individual in question is the Sunrunner lord Andry, who has spent most of the first two novels firmly in the camp of High Prince Rohan and his twice-mageborn son Pol. *Sunrunner's Fire* finds Andry becoming more and more involved in translating a unique scroll of ancient magical lore, and increasingly haunted by images of a war-torn future that only he seems able to perceive. Andry's passionate drive to prevent his visions from coming true leads him to launch a campaign to wipe out his sorcerous opposition—but zeal rises to obscure his judgment, and the sweep turns into a deadly pattern of persecution that may bring about the very disaster Andry originally sought to avoid.

The transformation would be more compelling if it weren't buried among at least two other major plots. Unfortunately, Andry's fall is crowded to one side by Prince Pol's assumption of real political importance and by the intricate under-

cover maneuvering of the Stoneburner faction that is the Sunrunners' rival in sorcery. While Andry is hardly the only well-constructed character in the novel, he is certainly the most distinctive, and it's frustrating to watch him being upstaged by events and authorial emphasis.

Thus the dilemma. Rawn's series can't be effectively picked up in midstream, so it's necessary to wade through some 1500 pages of lush but undistinguished narrative to get the full effect of Andry's metamorphosis. (No, I am *not* exaggerating.) That's entirely too much to ask of any but the most voracious readers, which makes it impossible to recommend Sunrunner's *Fire* and its predecessors as a whole. But Rawn's character-crafting ability is likewise too good not to deserve notice in this case. A DM who could pull the same trick with an NPC would score a spectacular coup for his campaign. Gamers are therefore informed—and warned: Read Rawn at your own risk.



#### WOLFWALKER

Tara K. Harper

Del Rey 0-345-36539-9 \$3.95

I've now lost all opportunity to be first in my high school graduating class to have a novel published—Tara K. Harper has beaten me to it with *Wolfwalker*. On balance, though, I can't complain, not about a book that smoothly combines familiar premises with a convincing knowledge of woodcraft and wilderness.

The clearest parallel is to the *Elfquest* cycle, as both that series and Harper's novel focus on intimate telepathic bonds between their protagonists and powerful wolves. But the wolfwalkers of Asengar are human and extremely rare, and the wolves of Asengar feel a touch less humanized than their counterparts in

*Elfquest* lore. There's a vague resonance with Anne McCaffrey's tales of Pern, since Asengar also appears to be a lost or abandoned colony world where humanity coexists with peculiar predators (worlags and badgerbears) and six-legged riding beasts.

McCaffrey lends a testimonial quote to the novel's cover that accurately captures the tone of the tale. Aside from a brief and dangerous foray into a trading city, most of the tale takes place along the route of a desperate chase in which the roles of pursuers and pursued regularly change hands. There's a hair-raising whitewater rapids sequence, a trek up a sheer cliff, several captures and near-captures, and the terrain ranges from broad plains to thick forests to snowbound mountains. And throughout, woodlore and outdoorsmanship are emphasized in a fashion that projects authenticity without lecturing.

But if the novel maintains a solid sense of adventure and pace, it leaves an occasionally unsettling puzzlement behind. Harper's wide-ranging geography is sometimes difficult to follow, especially without an accompanying map, and stretches credibility in a tale that limits its characters to no better than mounted travel. Her nomenclature occasionally defies logic; most names seem entirely made up, with two specific exceptions: a Pacific Northwest Indian tribal reference (Celilo), and a perfectly ordinary 20th-century name (Gunther). And most peculiar is healer-heroine Dion's abrupt comprehension of cellular biology when she finally achieves mastery of a long-lost psychic healing technique.

The inconsistencies, however, aren't enough to cost *Wolfwalker* its appeal. Between the familiar-sounding nature lore balanced against a faraway narrative lilt, and an amiably drawn if slightly ragged cast of adventurers, Tara Harper's novel is a thoroughly intriguing effort—and a real boon to referees looking for ways to spice up a wilderness setting, whether in an AD&D® game campaign or a low-tech SF milieu.

#### INTO THE SHADOWS

Jordan K. Weisman, ed.

FASA 1-55560-118-9 \$5.95

Two warnings going in: I have had only a very brief look at FASA's SHADOWRUN™ game on which this anthology is based; also, the broadly (and increasingly vaguely) defined realm of cyberpunk SF is not one of my major interests. This anthology, though, caught my eye for two reasons. First, as a native Northwesterner, I'm naturally interested in an RPG campaign set in my own metaphorical backyard. Second, the anthology is amazingly well produced for its price, with 11 crisp full-page illustrations and nine stories packed into an attractive large-format paperback.

The limited biographical data included says that one contributor lives in Virginia and another on Long Island. That's appar-



ently typical, because none of the stories uses more than minimal local color from the Pacific Northwest. As far as this volume is concerned, the game might as well be set in San Francisco or Los Angeles. Geography and place names are adequately researched, but any sense of regional personality is missing. The phenomenon extends to the art, which (except for the stylized Indian-totem "S" of the SHADOWRUN game's logo) highlights the cyberpunk and fantasy aspects of the narrative rather than drawing on Northwest traditions and culture.

On their own merits, the stories range from average to distinctive, with a reasonable balance between rapid-fire teamwork action and lone-wolf suspense. On balance, the better work is in the latter category, with solid contributions from Nyx Smith and Lorelei Shannon concerning a driven shapeshifter and an eccentric "decker" (Shadowrun's word for mind-to-mind computer hackers). Smith's "Striper" is particularly absorbing, with value for anyone looking for a tiger's-eye view of lycanthropy, though its entirely appropriate use of Tolkien's "Uruk-hai" may have been unwise. Best of the team-oriented tales are Michael Stackpole's "It's All Done With Mirrors," with solid character interplay and a spectacular climax, and Ken St. Andre's "Turtle in the Tower," which features a better-than-average treatment of tarot-style fortunetelling.

The background information is well presented, with enough to establish the flavor yet not so much as to remove the mystery and tension. Jargon is kept either minimal or intuitive (I had no trouble figuring out what "Mr. Johnson" meant, for instance). But the book doesn't quite work as the "braided anthology" described on the cover copy. Robert Charrette's opening story works on its own, but not as a setup for what follows; thereafter, only the Smith and Stackpole entries seem to connect successfully.

Still, *Into the Shadows* is a smooth and crisply executed introduction to the SHADOWRUN universe. Gamers curious about the system's flavor will be well satisfied, and the production values make the collection a striking value in its class.

#### CROMM

**Kenneth C. Flint**

**Doubleday 0-385-26749-5 \$19.95**

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**Doubleday 0-385-26750-9 \$8.95**

**(trade paper)**

I have letters in my files about Kenneth Flint whose work I hadn't read since one of his early novels rubbed me the wrong way. So when *Cromm* came along, it seemed only fair to give him a chance to live up to my correspondents' accolades. Unfortunately, it didn't happen—but keep in mind that this new novel is contemporary horror (or "dark fantasy"), rather than the Irish mythic history for which Flint is better known, so *Cromm's* problems may not be typical of Flint's other work.

Not that the ground is entirely unfamiliar—Flint draws on Irish lore for the title character, an ancient, apparently pre-Celtic creature whose cult practices blood sacrifice and whose followers are pursuing California-born Colin McMahon for reasons that Colin himself doesn't completely understand. It seems that Colin is the reincarnation of a Celtic warrior who dealt Cromm a crushing defeat many centuries past, and Cromm's forces are out to prevent a repeat performance.

Also caught up in the plot are Gilla Deair, an elusive, perhaps immortal wizard who just may be one of the Tuatha de Danann; Megan Conroy, the apparent reincarnation of Colin's predecessor's one true love; and St. Patrick, whose spiritual power is essential to Cromm's ultimate destruction. Propelled unpredictably by Gilla, events skip back and forth between waking dreams of Colin's earlier life and his efforts to prevent Cromm from spreading his reborn cult beyond the bounds of a remote Irish village.

Yet for all the time-jumping, the narrative feels inevitably linear, with no real twists or unexpected incidents separating point A from point B. At the same time, the internal logic is hard to unravel completely. Flint's tale has Cromm, Gilla, and Patrick all wielding real mystic powers, which makes for puzzling cosmology by 20th-century standards.

Most seriously, though, *Cromm* suffers from a peculiar schizophrenic blandness. The dream sequences are acceptable, if a bit thin, as high fantasy, but not sufficient to dominate the yarn. The present-day material is darker but just as thin—it doesn't induce the sort of tension or fear needed to make the tale work as horror, and it's focused too narrowly on Colin to sustain the atmosphere required to make it work as "dark fantasy." The various elements cancel each other out to produce

a mood best described as forgettable.

Again, this isn't an indictment of Flint's work as a whole; all indications from *Cromm* support those who have enjoyed his heroic fantasy. But I'd guess that those fans may find this new tale something of a disappointment, and horror devotees will find better pickings elsewhere.

#### DRAGONDOOM

**Dennis L. McKiernan**

**Bantam 0-553-28337-5 \$4.50**

This book surprised me—not by being especially good, but by being noticeably better than I expected. Longtime readers may recall that Dennis McKiernan's Iron Tower trilogy is near the top of the short list of books I actively encourage people not to read (mostly since anyone who's read Tolkien has read them already). *Dragon doom* is still set in McKiernan's highly derivative world of Mithgar, but at last he's developed a storyline of his own and has populated it with a couple of the most dangerous dragons this side of Tiamat.

Gamers will find the tale's focus familiar. A troop of men has decided to seek out and destroy one of the last remaining dragons in Mithgar, thereby acquiring the massive hoard assembled by Sleeth over the decades. But success brings more complications than riches, as three separate difficulties arise. Sleeth's loot proves far too massive to transport efficiently. Black Kalgalath, who with Sleeth's death becomes Mithgar's last living dragon, has his own designs on the treasure as well as an eye for revenge. And the dwarves from whom much of Sleeth's hoard was stolen quickly assert their own claim.

Into this arena of conflict come Elyn, surviving sister of Sleeth's human destroyer, and Thork, sworn to avenge his slain dwarven kin and destroy Kalgalath. Though adversaries by heritage, the two join forces against the deadly black dragon and his minions, and the bulk of the novel chronicles their joint quest to find and kill their common foe. McKiernan sketches the pair's uneasy relationship with precisely understated effectiveness, a welcome first in the Mithgarian cycle.

Kalgalath, meanwhile, is plotting and watching in formidable fashion. Those whose adventuring characters have short work of AD&D game dragons are in for a nasty where Kalgalath is concerned. McKiernan gives his fire-drake diabolical intelligence, a host of minion and magical aids, and a nearly impregnable fortress. Added to the creature's enormous physical might, these accoutrements make Kalgalath nearly invincible. Only supreme ingenuity and force of will—plus a certain amount of magic—allows Elyn and Thork any hope of success.

On the down side, McKiernan's prose retains the air of artificial formality that adds distance without quite setting a mood, and Mithgar itself remains much too close an analog to Middle-earth for

comfort. *Dragon doom* takes McKiernan beyond his previous penchant for rewriting Tolkien; now he's merely writing a Tolkien pastiche, rather as numerous authors have written post-canonical Sherlock Holmes adventures.

That's a mixed recommendation at best. But what McKiernan does right this time is encouraging enough to be worth noting, especially to gamers for whom the dragonlore and the bond between Elyn and Thork should provide a wealth of campaign-adaptable material.

#### BLOODLIST

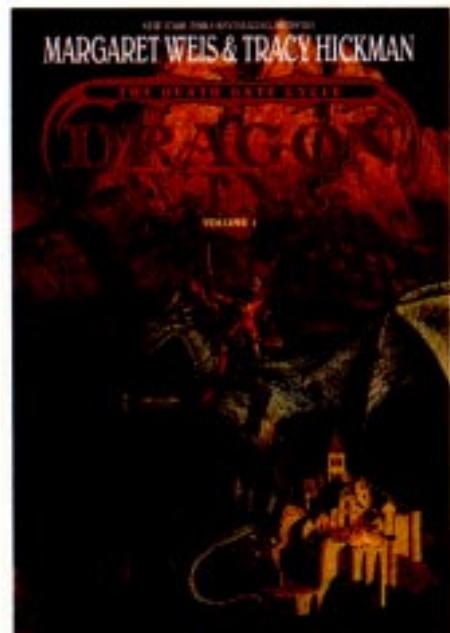
**P. N. Elrod**

**Ace 0-441-06795-6 \$3.50**

*Bloodlist* may be a vampire novel, but it's by no means a typical vampire novel. It is, in fact, a certifiably weird vampire novel. In part it's a gangster yarn set vaguely in 1930s Chicago. In part it's an apocryphal Sherlock Holmes tale. And in part it's a romantic mystery (first in a series, of course), in which newly made vampire Jack Fleming conducts an ongoing personal-ad search for the woman who transformed him into a member of the undead.

The vagueness of the period is a product of several factors. There are no specific date references and only a few chronological cues, most of them subtle. But while textual tags point to a date around 1936, the cynical first-person narration feels 10 or 20 years ahead of its time, and the Holmesian element pushes the atmosphere two decades in the other direction. The result is confusing and frustrating, rather as if someone had slipped an early Three Stooges short into a series of MTV music videos.

It should be noted that Sherlock Holmes, strictly speaking, doesn't appear (presumably Elrod ran into copyright difficulties), but the intent is clear. Protagonist Fleming's sidekick calls himself Charles Escott, emulating a well-known Holmes alias, and exhibits numerous Holmesian mannerisms



including a penchant for ingenious disguises. Escott, in fact, nearly steals the book from Fleming, whose partial amnesia and lack of local contacts severely limit his ability to investigate on his own.

But Elrod's sharp vampire's-eye view of the powers of the undead goes a long way to making up for her strange plot and character structuring. We get excellent treatment of such diverse problems as maintaining a supply of native earth, crossing water, and the advantages and limits of an intangible mist form, along with Fleming's adjustment to such vulnerabilities as silver, sunlight, and the problems of maintaining a respectable wardrobe (the up-and-coming vampire is much more durable than his suits, which don't regenerate after being shot).

*Bloodlist* is ultimately more intriguing than satisfying, especially when it's setting up the series premise, which seems superfluous to the self-contained organized-crime puzzle around which the novel revolves. When Elrod is busy with plot and character rather than atmosphere, her writing is tight and effective. Problem is, that's only about two-thirds of the time. On balance, though, the tale is intriguing enough to be worth a look. (And that conclusion has nothing to do with the fact that Elrod includes DRAGON® Magazine editors Roger Moore and Barbara Young among those she acknowledges in her dedication.)

#### Recurring roles

New novels from both Diane Duane and Charles de Lint have made recent debuts, which should be more than enough good news for a reader's bookshelf. Duane's *High Wizardry* (Delacorte, \$14.95) continues her lively series about teen spellcasters Nita and Kit, shifting the focus to Nita's sister Dairine. As usual, there are ample quantities of high drama, high adventure, and impish wit ("What did she do?" she said. "She went to Mars and left the door open!"). Computer enthusiasts in particular will enjoy this outing, involving a laptop wizards manual and a race of sentient silicon-based beings.

*Drink Down the Moon* (Ace, \$3.50) finds Charles de Lint back in the realms of fantasy. Some of the cast returns from his earlier *Jack, the Giant Killer*, but equally prominent are two musicians: the human Johnny Faw and the half-faerie Jemi Pook. De Lint is as good as ever at drawing characters and creating atmosphere, but the plot suffers somewhat from a split in focus and from its resemblance to Emma Bull's *War for the Oaks*. The novel remains highly readable, but it's not de Lint's best work.

A number of series have new entries to report, the most notable being *Sunshaker's War* (Avon, \$3.95) from Tom Deitz. The latest tale of David Sullivan, the MacTyrie gang, and the intrusion of magical conflict into everyday Georgia demonstrates Deitz's ongoing knack for blending the trials

of the real world with high-stakes tension on a cosmic scale. This is one fantasy series that has genuinely grown in scope and thoughtfulness with each new volume, rather than falling into an infinite loop of recycled plots. Also in this above-average camp are *Revolution's Shore* (Bantam, \$3.95), second in Alis Rasmussen's Highroad trilogy of intricate space adventures, and *The Dark Hand of Magic* (Del Rey, \$4.95), latest of Barbara Hambly's chronicles of untrained wizard Sun Wolf and his companion the Starhawk. Rasmussen continues to bring a refreshingly literate style to her darkly operatic swashbucklers, while Hambly's portrayal of mercenary warfare remains convincingly balanced against the twin enemies of intrigue and magic.

For some reason, Craig Shaw Gardner's second Cineverse book, *Bride of the Slime Monster* (Ace, \$3.95) doesn't grate on the imagination as much as the first. Perhaps it's because Gardner broadens his satiric scope in this entry, attempting to skewer everything from animated cuteness to oversymbolic art films. But labeling the novel satire is still being generous, and those looking for more intelligent humor won't find the search difficult.

"Wildly variable" is the only phrase that covers a pair of recent *Star Trek* entries. The *Pandora Principle* (Pocket, \$4.50) is a solid, occasionally sparkling book from newcomer Carolyn Clowes, whose novel ably fills in much of Saavik's mixed Vulcan-Romulan background. If she can learn to temper her enthusiasm for italicized dialog, Clowes should become a first-class storyteller before long. But Jean Lorrah's experience can't save her "Next Generation" novel, *Metamorphosis*, (Pocket, \$4.95) from a bad case of rampant confusion. Besides introducing yet another race of unexplained godlike aliens, Lorrah utterly undercuts her exploration of Data's perennial quest for humanity with a climax stolen from prime-time TV soap operas. Appropriately, this is the only *Star Trek* novel to date carrying a disclaimer that says it doesn't necessarily reflect the "official" *Star Trek* universe.

Last but not least, *Dragon Wing* (Bantam, \$18.95) begins an ambitious new cycle from Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman. This one is complicated, with competing schools of subtle magic at work far beyond the knowledge of most of the characters. Two Weis-and-Hickman hallmarks stand out: a distinctive, richly imagined setting, this time in a fragmented world of floating asteroid-like lands and aerial trading convoys (inspirations may have included James Blaylock and Michael Reaves); and a central theme concerned with achieving flexibility within rigid societal structures. Only a very occasional lapse of idiom mars the narrative—referring to the odd Prince Bane as a "kid" just doesn't sound right in this carefully constructed milieu. Nonetheless, the Death Gate cycle is off to an imposing start. Ω



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# CONVENTION CALENDAR

## Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines **must** be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing **must** include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address(es) and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

**WARNING:** We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the last Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

\* indicates a product produced by a company other than TSR Inc. Most product names are trademarks owned by the companies publishing those products. The use of the name of any product without mention of its trademark status should not be construed as a challenge to such status.

**NOTE:** Be aware that there are now at least four SF/fantasy/gaming conventions with very similar names: ICON, held in Iowa; I-CON, in Long Island, N.Y.; I-KHAN, in Colorado Springs, Colo.; and I-CON, in British Columbia. Other duplicated convention names have been noted (e.g., DEMICON in Des Moines, Iowa, and Aberdeen, Md.). Plan carefully!

## ECONOMYCON III, July 6-8

This convention will be held at Alma School in Mesa, Ariz. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, BATTLE FOR MOSCOW®, CIVILIZATION®, and SUPREMACY® games, with open gaming, Japanimation, World War II micro-armor, and the LOST WORLDS® fantasy-book game. Write to: ECONOMYCON, 2740 S. Alma School #16, Mesa AZ 85202.

## ARCANACON VIII, July 12-15

Random Incorporated is again holding this nonprofit convention, at the Collingwood Education Center in Melbourne, Australia. Events include AD&D®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, RUNEQUEST®, WARHAMMER 40,000®, and HUNTER PLANET® games. Write to: ARCANACON VIII, Random Inc., P.O. Box 125, Parkville 3052, NSW, AUSTRALIA.

## ATLANTICON '90, July 13-15

This convention will be held at the Baltimore Sheraton Inner Harbor Hotel and the Baltimore Convention Center. Activities include gaming and free game demonstrations, game auctions, a flea market, 24-hour open gaming areas, and discount coupons for all preregistrants. Registration: \$14 for the weekend prepaid, or \$18 at the door (one-day passes also available at the door). Write to: ATLANTICON, P.O. Box 15405, Baltimore MD 21220; or call: (301) 574-5066.

## COSCON '90, July 13-15

Sponsored by the Circle of Swords, this gaming convention will be held at Slippery Rock University in Slippery Rock, Pa. Events include first-run RPGA™ tournaments and events, board games, a dealers' area, a flea market, and a miniatures-painting contest. On-site housing is available. Registration: \$10 until June 30, or \$15 thereafter. Write to: Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler PA 16003; or call: Dave Schnur at: (412) 283-1159.

## QUIN CON V, July 13-15

This three-day event will offer RPGs, fantasy and historical miniatures, board and card games, and RPGA™ events. A special tournament for the Hemophilia Fund will also take place. The guest of honor will be game and module designer Lester Smith. This event will be held at the Roadway Inn in (Quincy, Ill.). Ask about special rates for convention attendees.

Registration: \$5/day or \$12 for the weekend, preregistered. Write to: QUIN CON V, 3632 Maine St., Quincy IL 62301 (include an SASE); or call: (217) 223-8498.

## DOVERCON VI, July 14-15

It will be held this year at the University of New Hampshire's Memorial Union Building (MUB) in Durham, N.H. Activities include an RPGA™ AD&D® tournament and many other gaming events, a film festival, and miniatures and art competitions. Registration: \$15 at the door, or \$10 for one day. Dealers and judges are welcome. Write to: DOVERCON VI, P.O. Box 753, Dover NH 03820.

## CASTLECON III, July 20-22

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Bethesda, in Bethesda, Md. Events include SF, fantasy, gaming, music, costumes, computers, science, and friendship. Registration: \$18 until June 30; \$25 at the door. Write to: FanTek, 1607 Thomas Rd., Fort Washington MD 20744.

## CHIMERA, July 20-22

This science-fiction convention will be held in the Hyatt Regency Woodfield in Schaumburg, Ill. Guests of honor are Connie Willis, Howard Waldrop, and Gardner Dozois. Other guests include Richard Knaak, Fred Pohl, and Barbara G. Young. The seminars are all designed to make the reader of SF more than just a consumer. Registration: \$40. Write to: CHIMERA, 1016 Columbian, Oak Park IL 60302.

## I-KHAN, July 20-22

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn North in Colorado Springs, Colo. Special guest of honor will be Andrew J. Offutt. Tournaments include AD&D®, WARHAMMER 40,000®, CAR WARS®, SKY GALLEONS OF MARS®, and BATTLETECH® games. Other activities include open gaming, a movie room, a pre-1960s movie theme costume contest, a dealers' room, a miniatures-painting contest, and our own version of *Highlander*. Registration: \$15, plus a \$1 fee per event. Write to: Miniatures War gamers Guild, 2354 S. Academy Blvd., Colorado Springs CO 80916; or call: Perry Rogers at: (719) 392-2656.

## CON-TEST '90, July 21

Sponsored by the Lebanon Area Gamers' ASSOC., this convention will be held at Kaspar's Ark, north of Lebanon, Pa. Events include AD&D®, CHAMPIONS®, SHADOWRUN, and AXIS AND ALLIES® games. There will also be AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, and CAR WARS® tournaments sponsored by the New England Peddler. Other activities include a miniatures painting contest, with a \$2 entry fee per figure. Registration: \$5 before the convention, \$7.50 at the door. Write to: Lebanon Area Gamers' Assoc., 806 Cumberland St., Lebanon PA 17042; or call: (717) 274-8706.

## CONJUNCTION, July 27-29

This convention will take place at New Hall College, Cambridge, England. The guest of honor will be Gregory Stafford. Events include no game tournaments, but there will be panels, a masquerade, films, and a dealers' area. There will also be combat demonstrations, live-action role-playing, PBMs, workshops, and a real ale bar. Membership is £12 for those over 18. Write to: CONJUNCTION, 27 Terront Road, London N15 3AA, UNITED KINGDOM; or call: John Dallman at: 01-802-8723.

## OKON '90, July 27-29

The region's largest SF convention will be held

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at the Camelot Hotel in Tulsa, Okla. Guests of honor include Hal Clement, Tom Kidd, Mark Simmons, David Lee Anderson, and Brad Sinor. Events include AD&D®, CHAMPIONS®, WARHAMMER 40,000®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, and CAR WARS® games. Write to: OKON, P.O. Box 4229, Tulsa OK.

#### DARCON I, July 28

Sponsored by Darkstar Fantasy Concepts, this convention will be held at the Hillbrow Recreation Center in Johannesburg, South Africa. Events include AD&D® and SF games, various tournaments, and a dealers' room. Registration: R5 per player. Write to: DFC DARCON I, Evan Dempsey, 24 Vincent Rd., Rosettenville-ext, Johannesburg (Tvl), R.S.A., 2197.

#### GFR ROLEPLAYER DAYS '90, July 28-29

The Gilde der Fantasyrollenspieler proudly presents this convention at the Burgerschaffthaus, Gorlinger Zentrum 15, Cologne (Kln), West Germany. Many games will be featured. Registration: DM 6/day or DM 10/weekend. Write to: GTR, c/o Bernd Streckman, Bruchstr. 48, 4030 Ratingen 1, West Germany.

#### PROJECT GENESIS VII, July 29

PATCO presents this fantasy gaming convention at the Ramada Inn in Fresno, Calif. Tournaments and events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, STAR WARS®, and TOON® games, with computer gaming, Japanimation, a miniatures contest, and a swap meet. Registration: \$3 before July 13; \$5 thereafter. Dealers and judges are welcome! Write to: PATCO, c/o Philip S. Pitt, 5415 E. Washington, Fresno CA 93727; or call: (209) 456-1668.

#### DALLASCON '90, August 3-5

The southwest's largest gaming convention will be held at the Le Baron Hotel on Regal Row in Dallas, Tex. Tournaments include AD&D® and BATTLETECH® games. Other activities include WARHAMMER®, SHADOWRUN®, CHAMPIONS®, AXIS & ALLIES®, and ROLEMASTER® games, as well as seminars, an auction, a painting contest, and a dealers' room. Send an SASE to: DALLASCON '90, P.O. Box 867623, Plano TX 75086.

#### FAMILYCON I, August 3-5

This family-oriented convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Timonium, Md. Activities include a dealers' room, hands-on science programming, and SF and fantasy panels for all ages. Write to: FAMILYCON, 3309 Taney Rd., Baltimore MD 21215.

#### I-CON I, August 3-5

Victoria's first SF convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Victoria, B.C., Canada. Guests of honor include Michael G. Coney, Donna Barr, and Nichelle Nichols. Events include panels, an art show and auction, videos, gaming, a writers' workshop, art and costuming demonstrations, a diplomatic reception, a masquerade, two dances, a dealers' room, and live theater. Registration: \$30 Canadian (\$28 U.S.). Dealers are welcome. Write to: I-CON, P.O. Box 30004, 104-3995 Quadra St., Victoria, B.C., CANADA V8X 5E1; or call: (604) 383-1123.

#### OMACON X, August 3-5

This pro-space, gaming, and comic convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Central in Omaha, Neb., and is sponsored by Nebraskans for the Advancement of Space Development.

Guests of honor include Rick Sternbach, John Ford, Bjo nimble, and Art Bozlee. Write to: OMACON, P.O. Box 37851, Omaha NE 68137.

#### CAPITOLCON VI, August 4-5

This event will be held at the Sacred Heart-Griffin High School in Springfield, Ill. Featured events include board and miniatures war gaming, FRPGs, vendors, and a used-game auction. Write to: Bill Wilson, 99 Cottonwood Dr., Chatham IL 62623; or call: (217) 483-5797 or (217) 523-0916.

#### 1990 GEN CON® Game Fair, August 9-12

Make your plans now to attend the biggest and best game convention of them all, at the MECCA Convention Center, Milwaukee, Wis. We've brought in over 10,000 people for two years running! Write to: 1990 GEN CON® Game Fair, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147.

#### BATTLETECH\*: OPERATION GREEN FLAG, August 11-12

This mid-Atlantic regional BATTLETECH\* convention is the first official FASA-sanctioned tournament to be held at the Central Penn Business School in Summerdale, Pa. Featured will be a vigorous round-robin and four-person lance competitions. Open gaming will also be available both days. Registration: \$8-12, depending on the date of registration. Attendance is limited. Write to: M. Foner's Games Only Emporium, 200 Third St., New Cumberland PA 17070; or call: (717) 774-6676.

*Continued on page 101*



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# TSR PREVIEWS

**NOTE:** The dates in this column have been changed to reflect the on-sale (not shipping) dates for these products.

## NEW PRODUCTS FOR JULY

### PHBR4 *The Complete Wizard's Handbook*

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If you thought you had the wizard class figured out, think again! This invaluable reference book expands the realms of the wizard class, with new character kits, ingenious uses for common spells, and a vast array of new information opening wide the doors for wizards everywhere.

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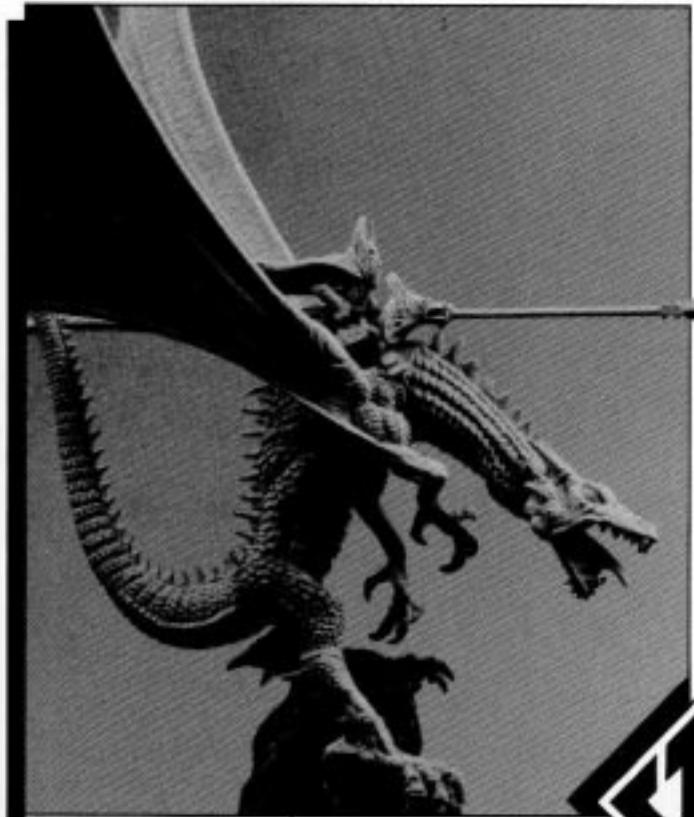
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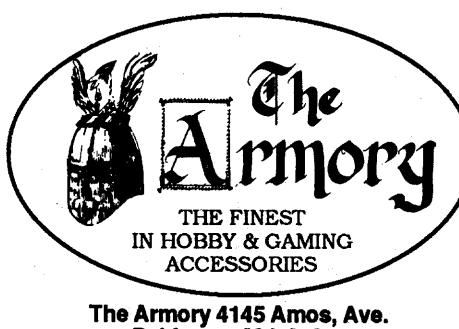
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We all love tabletop role-playing games, of course; it's great fun to get together with a group of friends in heroic guise and tackle the forces of evil, defeating the enemy's wretched minions in imaginary combat and reaping the rewards of victory for our player characters. But after a few years of knocking the heads off orcs and pitching grenades at terrorists, you may find you want to try new ways of role-playing, and the limitations of tabletop role-playing become all too clear. Your character can interact with the imaginary world of the game only through the limited window of the game master's attention. That single person controls what you see, who you talk to, and whether you succeed or fail. You can interact to a limited degree with your fellow player characters, but since they also must see the world through the focus of the GM, everyone is primarily oriented toward the GM. And since there's only one GM, the player characters must always find a consensus and work together, even when their goals are so conflicting that they would prefer to separate and do their own things. Sorry, players, no can do—splitting the party is just too hard to handle in a typical tabletop game.

So while creating group stories through tabletop role-playing is certainly enjoyable, don't you wish you could have greater control over your part of the story? Don't you wish you could make your own decisions without being constantly steered by the heavy hand of the GM? It can be done. There's a new way to play role-playing games that's not simple, but it sure is satisfying. This article is all about it.

I live near Baltimore. Last March I attended BALTICON, the largest of the annual Baltimore SF and fantasy conventions. I was scanning through the program guide, looking for something new or interesting, and my finger stopped at a panel titled "The Future of Interactive Literature." This sounded like it had something to do with role-playing games, so I stayed late Saturday night to attend it. The room was filled with animated and articulate people who all seemed to know each other. They had their own jargon and in-jokes, but I gathered that these folks had been running and participating in live multiplayer role-playing games involving as many as 50 to 100 people at a time! They'd been putting on these games mainly at SF conventions, and the games seemed to involve more acting and storytelling than the usual live-action orc-bashing or "assassination" games. These live RPGs were written in advance by teams of GMs who created the basic plot situations, then spent the bulk of their efforts designing complex characters, focusing on their motivations and interrelationships. Each player assumed the role of one of these characters and played out the game following his own judgment.

I was very interested, if only in what kind of rules mechanics they could have

developed to handle a 50-player game. I inquired as to how one got involved in this pursuit, and was advised that I should try to attend the Society for Interactive Literature's annual convention, which is entirely devoted to live role-playing games. The 1989 convention, SILICON IV (from SIL: Society for Interactive Literature), was only two weeks away, so I would have to act fast if I wanted to register.

There were three simultaneous games scheduled to run at SILICON IV, and obviously the thing to do was to sign up for one of them. The games were "Escape Velocity: a cyberpunk game that was already full; "Cocabana," set in a banana republic during a coup d'état; and "RMS Titanic," being run by the Mage's Seal GM's group for the second and final time. "Cocabana" didn't interest me much, so I signed up for "R.M.S. Titanic." The application form asked what sort of character I wanted to play; I requested a "smug, pompous, self-righteous, upper-crust aristocrat."

In the week before the convention, I got a couple of books on the *Titanic* and read up on the ship and its one-and-only voyage in 1912. The first-class passenger list was studded with some of the most famous names of the day: English nobility, artists and writers, and American robber-baron millionaires. For me, the one character who really stood out was J. Bruce Ismay, president of White Star Lines and owner of the *Titanic*, who went along on the maiden voyage to mingle with the aristocracy and lord it over the officers and crew. He survived the shipwreck, tried in vain to cover up the mistakes that led to the disaster, and ended by living the rest of his life in ignominy, a virtual recluse. In one night he went from master of the largest, most celebrated, and most elaborate vehicle ever built to scapegoat for two angry nations. History's verdict: serves him right.

SILICON IV was held in a hotel on the northeast side of Philadelphia; on the Friday it began, I left work a couple of hours early and drove on up. I checked in and found some roommates to share expenses with me, then picked up my character packet, a handsome folder with a number of loose-leaf pages inside. I retreated to my room to read it. Quickly skipping over the rules of the game and the background material on the *Titanic*, I turned to the character section, where I read: "You are J. Bruce Ismay. . . ."

Well, this was just too cool for words. I had been cast as the master of the *Titanic*! I read on. As Ismay, I had several minor character goals, but my main object was to make sure that the *Titanic* beat the *Olympic*'s speed record for transatlantic crossing time, as I had a bet with J. P. Morgan that would enable me to regain the control of White Star Lines from him if I won. (Morgan was supposed to have been on the *Titanic*'s only voyage, but an illness kept him in England—more's the pity.)

I read the game rules and was surprised

to see just how few there were. A couple of pages of simple combat rules—with a paragraph apiece on pocket-picking, safe-cracking, and cheating at cards—seemed to be all that were needed. Far more space was devoted to the history and social background of the ship and a passenger list with short character descriptions. There were no rappelling rules, no thrown-object scatter tables, no fatigue-modified movement rates, no character skill rules to speak of—clearly, this game was mainly about social interaction, and success at character interaction was dependent on the player's own skill. What a radical concept!

My character's possessions were defined by a handful of paper coins, pound notes, and checks (for passing bribes and paying gambling debts), plus several "special ability" and "item" cards. These were 3" x 5" cards that described abilities I possessed (e.g., Ship's Knowledge—I knew my way around the ship) and objects I owned (e.g., a naval revolver). These cards were to be shown to other players at appropriate moments to prove that I had what I said I had.

At the BALCON panel, I had gotten the idea that costuming could be fairly important at these games, so I had come prepared with several outfits: a suit with an old-school tie, a smoking jacket, and best of all, a naval officer's formal jacket. I'd picked it up years ago at a used-clothing store for no good reason other than that it had looked cool, and now at last I had a use for it. I put on a white shirt, black pants, and black bow tie, slipped a (borrowed) pocket watch in one pocket and a (borrowed) hip flask in another, then donned my naval jacket. Thus nattily attired, I went down to the Game Control Room to meet the other passengers.

The hotel had a large open indoor pool area, fronted on two sides by two floors of rooms, the upper floors giving out onto railed balconies with spiral staircases that led down to poolside. SILICON had rented this entire area for the weekend. The *Titanic*'s Game Control Room was a suite on an upper level; outside "Deck B" was lined with deck chairs, and we could look down onto "Deck C" below us. There were five GMs and about 25 players in the game. Each player represented a fictionalized version of an actual *Titanic* passenger, each with his own goals.

I soon found that the game was played almost exclusively between the players, wherever they happened to be, with only occasional intercession by a GM when something needed to be resolved or explained. (In fact, if you needed a GM, you had to go and find one.) The GMs had set up the game, but the action was controlled and directed almost entirely by the players. Essentially, each player tried to become his character for the duration of the weekend. Players were on their honor to act only on the knowledge their characters would have, and I saw not a single abuse

of this trust. When somebody had a question or wanted to do something complicated, a GM might be called, but just as often the players figured out what would happen on their own and reported it to the GMs later.

We players spent Friday night and Saturday morning discreetly feeling each other out and discovering who was who. At least four major subplots were already underway: a murder mystery, a tangled espionage case, an art forgery scheme, and something having to do with Egyptian artifacts and spiritualism that I never quite figured out. ("Rubbish!" I sniffed whenever the subject came up.) Plus there were several financial schemes looking for investors (including a scheme of my own), an out-of-control fire burning in the bottom of coal bunker No. 6 that I had to keep the passengers from discovering, some sort of smuggling plot, and a crazed saboteur hired by J. P. Morgan to slow or stop the ship.

The game took place anywhere in the hotel characters happened to be, in any possible combination of characters, which meant that no one person could possibly know everything that was going on. (This may be the only form of storytelling where this is true.) The GMs occasionally introduced new twists—for example, the ghostly apparition prophesying doom that appeared in the corridor during the charity art auction, sending all the spiritualists into a tizzy. ("Rubbish!")

Costuming was optional and varied from jeans and T-shirt to full Edwardian regalia. It wasn't supposed to make a difference, but clearly a player in full costume had a psychological advantage over a player with none. The characters were of three main groups: the ship's officers, including Captain E. J. Smith; the high-class aristocrats, such as the Astors, the Duff-Gordons, the Thayers and Wideners, Count Boris Romanoff, and Major Archibald Butt, a personal friend of President Taft; and the lesser lights in first class, such as the "unsinkable" Molly Brown, mystery writer Jacques Futrelle, actress Dorothy Gibson, cardshark C. H. Rollmaine, and Pinkerton man F. M. Curran. As J. Bruce Ismay, I was both a member of the upper crust and privy to the activities of the ship's officers, which I found an excellent arrangement. I got to swank it with the Duff-Gordons and still cast the deciding vote among the officers when problems came up. Whenever some new horrible calamity befell the vessel, I would have to go and explain it away to the first-class passengers, each time a little less convincingly than the last.

It was delightful. When I wasn't escorting the glamorous Frau Antoinette Flegheim to the Ladies' High Tea or dinner at the Captain's Table, I was ordering the Captain to press on at full speed through the fog and not be so damned overcautious about a few reports of ice floes. The other players worked busily at their own

goals, arranging business deals, forging alliances, conducting romances, setting up swindles, and exacting vengeance for crimes past. Some players got so involved in the endless high-stakes poker game in the first-class salon that they hardly seemed to notice the other intrigues that swirled about them. Everyone played with a gusto that was undiminished by the knowledge that we were probably all going to end up in Davy Jones's locker.

On advice of the first officer, the captain took a more southerly course than originally planned to avoid the ice, but we still ran over a small "growler" iceberg late Saturday night. This sprung a couple of seams in the forward boiler room, and worse, interrupted my game of whist in the salon! But the damage was insignificant, really—the pumps were well able to keep ahead of it—so we went back up to full speed and cleared the ice field within a few hours.

By Sunday morning, most of the plots had just about worked themselves out, and some of the players (when out of character) were beginning to think that we might make New York safely, but of course we were doomed from any one of a number of possible causes. That out-of-control fire smoldering in the No. 6 coal bunker could have burst out onto the decks, or the sabotaged boilers might have exploded, or the Egyptian curse on the tomb-robbers could have caused the ship to split open like a ripe melon. As it happened, it was the bombs set in the cargo hold by the agents of the Kaiser that finally did us in. (Of course, if I, in my character as a pompous ass, hadn't consistently diverted all investigations away from the ringleader, Frau Flegheim— "It's inconceivable that she could be involved in this sort of thing!" —the ship's officers might have found the bombs in time. But something else would have gotten us.)

With a rip in the hull that extended across four cargo holds, we started taking on water, but at first we weren't terribly alarmed—we all knew the *Titanic* was unsinkable. It meant my bet with Morgan was lost, and we'd have to head for Halifax as the closest port, but one must keep one's composure, after all. Then we started getting panicky reports from belowdecks, so I sent Thomas Andrews, the ship's designer, down into the holds to assess the situation. He came back, shaken, and informed the captain and me that the *Titanic* was definitely going to sink. Reluctantly, I gave the order to start lowering the boats. That's when I "discovered" we didn't have enough boats for everybody.

The climax of the game, the sinking, went very rapidly and was magnificently stage-managed by the GMs, who came to the fore for the final scene. Despite confusion and misdirection, we managed to get the boats away with all the women and children from first class aboard. Only a few men managed to weasel their way

onto the boats, and this time Ismay wasn't one of them. (Frau Flegheim, the agent of our doom, was in the first boat away—she drew a revolver and commandeered it.) Meanwhile, the GMs went around and recruited every member of the convention who wasn't currently active in "Escape Velocity" or "Cocabana" to be second- and third-class passengers on the *Titanic*. As the last boats were loading first-class women and children on Deck B, the lower-class passengers swarmed up the spiral staircases and tried to mob us, but we managed to beat them back and lock the gates. I spotted one group circling around the back way (through the hotel to the other entrance of the suite), so Major Butt and I headed them off at the door. As they pretended to charge, I fired my cardboard revolver into the air, but Major Butt, brandishing his 3" x 5" cavalry sabre in one hand, started mowing them down with the revolver in his other. In the face of this mayhem, the mob retreated, and we locked that gate as well.

The ship was listing badly now, and the imaginary foredeck was awash. From up on the balcony, those of us left on the ship could see the groups of folding chairs out by the pool that represented the lifeboats. The seamen left on the ship were working feverishly to free four more collapsible lifeboats from the top of the pilot house. They finally got one afloat, but as we started to go down to it, it was mobbed by lower-class passengers. A GM on the balcony announced that only those players with a ticket would be considered to be on the collapsible lifeboat—and then she tossed a handful of tickets down onto the pool deck. Most of us left on B Deck disdained to get involved in the resulting melee. (The final ticket was tossed into the pool, and one player unhesitatingly dove in after it.)

The last boat was away. First Officer Lightoller and Sir Cosmo Duff-Gordon were building a raft of deck chairs, but Major Butt and I decided to jump for it. Luck and the frigid water of the North Atlantic were against us; we drowned. The ship went under at last, and the suction pulled down Sir Cosmo's raft, and they all drowned, too. A few swimmers were pulled into lifeboats, but too many got into Collapsible A—it capsized, and more players were lost. Finally, the RMS *Carpathia* arrived to pick up the survivors. The quick and the dead then stood up together and solemnly sang "Eternal Father, Strong to Save" ("O hear us when we cry to Thee/ For those in peril on the sea!"). Okay, the ending was a bit of a downer, but what did you expect from a tragedy like the *Titanic*?

The "Interactive Literature" form of live role-playing has its origins back in 1982, when a Boston SF fan named Walt Freitag started talking about how to do a real-time, live-action role-playing game. His friends encouraged him to quit talking about it and do it, so Freitag contacted the

organizers of the annual BOSKONE SF convention and proposed a science-fiction role-playing game for a large number of players. There was no reply for several months, and Freitag had written it off, when shortly before the convention the organizers got back in touch with him and said: So, is that game ready yet? Freitag enlisted several of his friends as collaborators, and they managed to concoct "Rekon," their first live role-playing game, in about three nights. It premiered at Boskone in January 1983, for about 30 players, most of whom felt it was a big success. In fact, some players who had come up from the Baltimore-Washington area were so impressed with "Rekon" that they asked permission to run their own version of the game down south. That game, "Reklone," was run at a Washington convention in the summer of 1983.

So it went for a couple of years, each game larger than the last. "Rekon 2" was run in Boston in 1984, "Reklone 2" in Washington. "Rekon 3" was a fantasy game for almost 200 players, which introduced so many people to the idea of live role-playing that by late 1985 new games were popping up all over the place. By 1986, most SF conventions in the Boston or Baltimore-Washington areas featured live role-playing games of some sort. Players were drawn from science-fiction fans, gamers, and theater people, with little or no crossover with conventional tabletop role-playing.

By this time, the originators of the Rekons had decided that this approach to storytelling was a new art form and deserved its own name. They settled on "interactive literature," a name that has stuck despite its pretentiousness. The most experienced GMs got together and formed the Society for Interactive Literature, or SIL. SIL's main functions are the exchange of information and the sponsorship of conventions devoted to live role-playing games. SILICON I was held in 1986 and featured experimental games that it was

felt wouldn't go over so well at a SF convention—games like "See Jane Run," which was set inside a human body, with the players cast as various organs. There are now just under a thousand active players of live role-playing games, and most are still found in either Boston or the Baltimore-Washington area, so SILICONs are usually held somewhere in between.

Playing role-playing games is always a collaborative process; with live role-playing games, even game mastering is a collaboration. A game for 50 players requires the creation of 50 detailed characters and a complex web of interrelationships. This is such a daunting task that groups of four to eight GMs are usually formed to write a live role-playing game, and each game is usually prepared over a period of months. The GMs decide how the characters goals are related, and which characters can hinder or help each other. It takes a delicate touch; each character's goal must be achievable within the span of a weekend—but not too soon, or the player will feel the game was too easy. The game must be designed so it will run pretty much on its own, for if it needs too much input from the GMs, the players will be frustrated and the GMs will be run ragged long before the game is over.

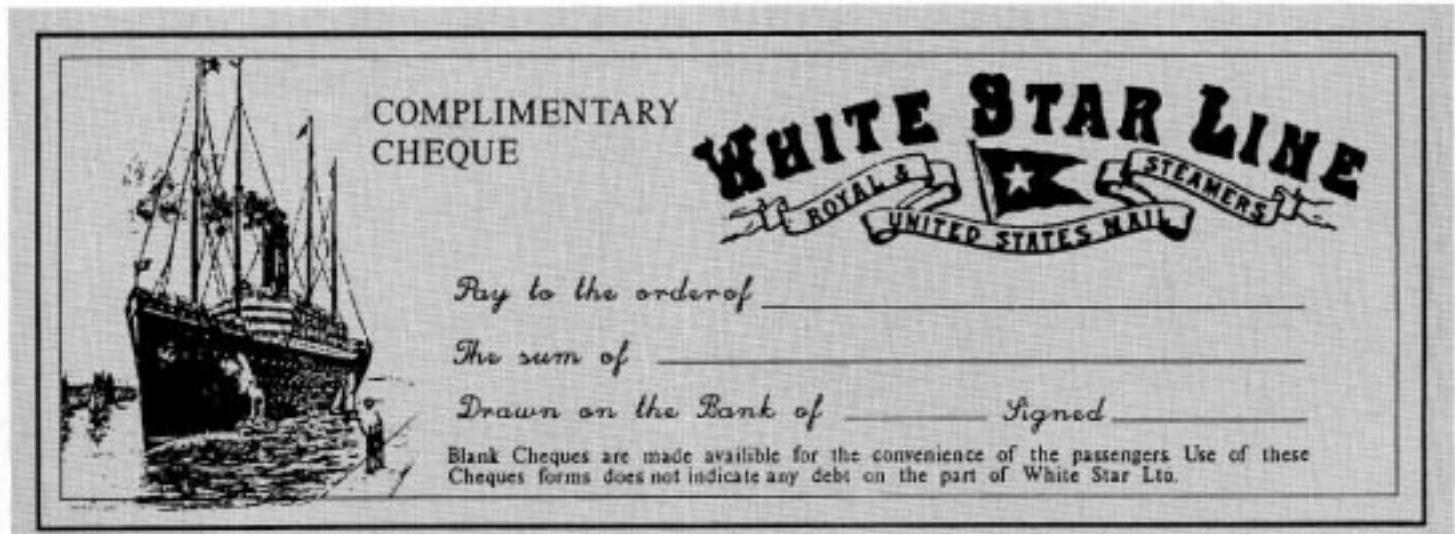
Playing is not nearly as much work as game mastering, especially since most games have few actual game mechanics that the player needs to understand. The major skill a player needs is to be able to walk up to a person he doesn't know and introduce himself. Playing the game consists mainly of staying in character while having a series of conversations with various other players. A player must find out what he needs to know without giving away too many of the player's own secrets, but a player who won't trade information won't learn anything, so it doesn't pay to be too close mouthed.

As in tabletop gaming, some players concentrate on role-playing and being theatrical, while others more goal

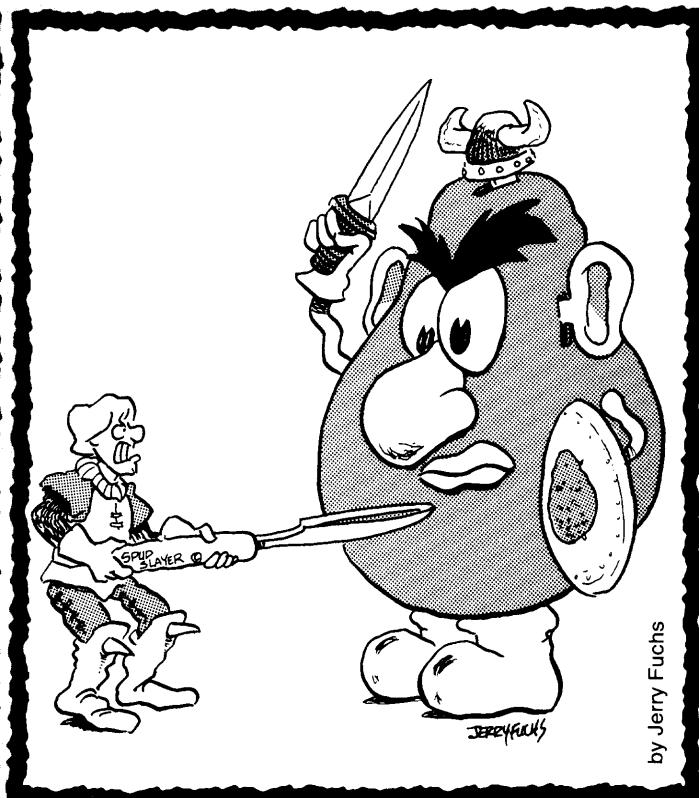
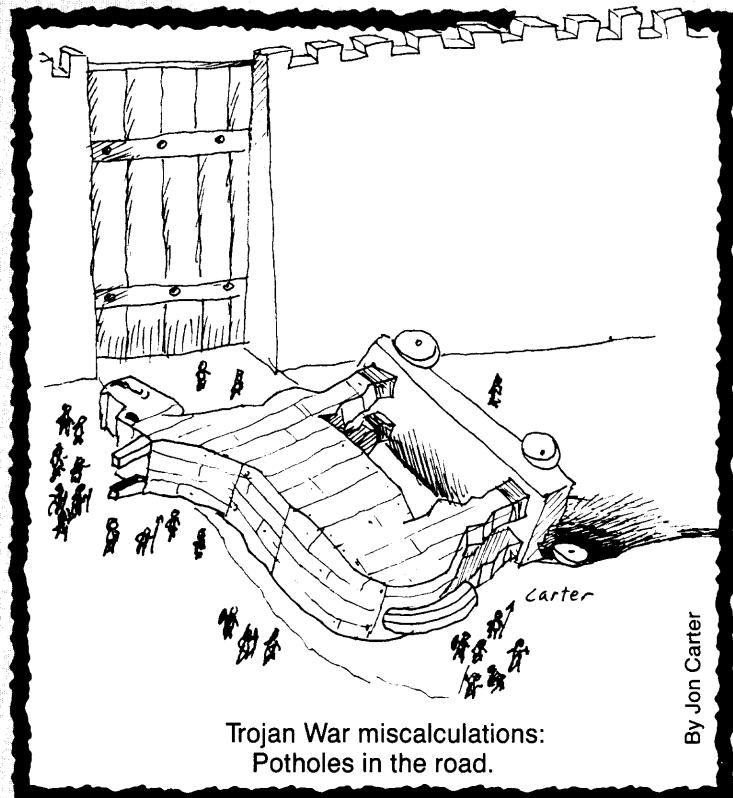
oriented. The best games provide plenty of opportunity for both styles of play. About 50 or 60 different games have been run to date, many of them based on science fiction or fantasy, but others are on virtually every subject with any dramatic potential. There have been a couple of Wild West games, a game based on characters from Shakespeare, another based on Watergate, a Weekly Midnight News game based on tabloid reality, and several historical situations, such as "Golden Horn," which simulated politics in the Byzantine Empire. Other games have drawn from the works of authors as diverse as H. P. Lovecraft, Steven Brust, and Dick Francis. I just signed up for "Shogun," in which I'll be playing the part of a samurai warlord in 16th-century Japan. Look out, Toshiro Mifune!

If you're interested in trying out live role-playing, and you live on the East Coast, the odds are good that there will be a game at the next SF convention in your area. (Most games at SF conventions hold a few parts open for walk-in players to encourage novices to play.) If you want to preregister for a game, or if you live elsewhere in the country, your best bet is to subscribe to *Metagame*, the SIL's newsletter that (among other things) lists announcements of upcoming games—what they're about and where and when they'll be run. Live role-playing is gradually spreading west and south, and will probably be showing up in your major metropolitan area within the next couple of years. So get ready—live role-playing is coming your way!

Contact the Society for Interactive Literature at: P.O. Box 44-1478, Somerville MA 02144, U.S.A. Membership dues are \$5.00 per year. Subscriptions to *Metagame* are also \$5.00 per year, and should be sent to the above address. Articles or information for *Metagame* should be sent to: John O'Neil, *Metagame* Editor, 9 Chauncy St. #32, Cambridge MA 02138, U.S.A.



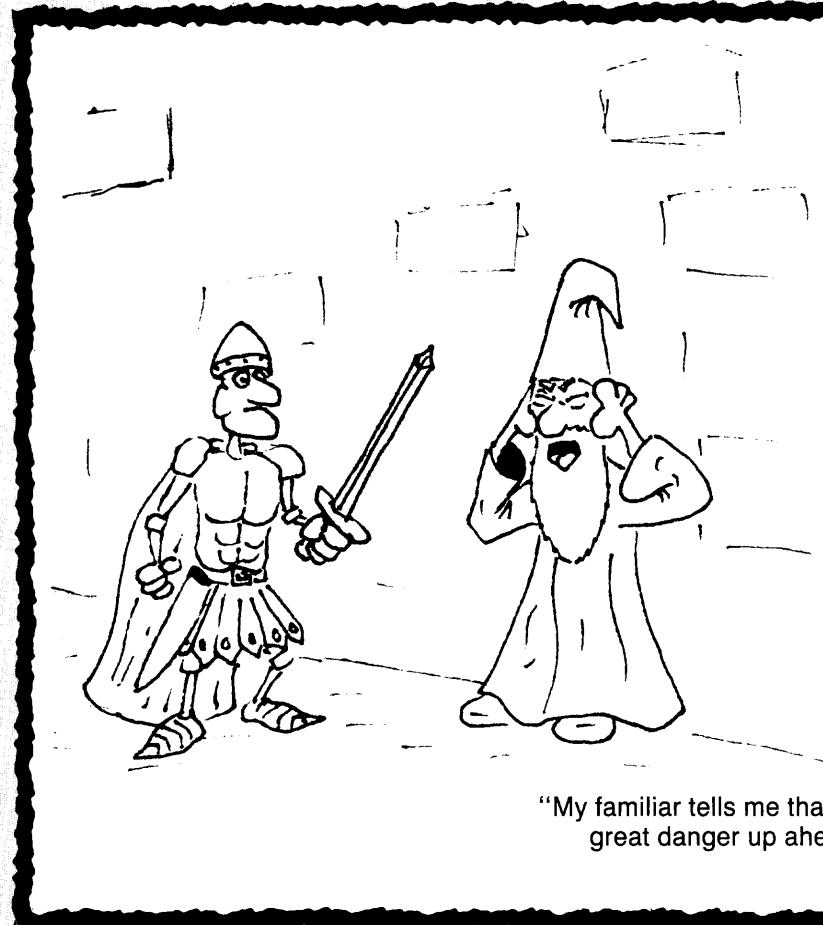
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Trojan War miscalculations:  
Potholes in the road.

By Jon Carter

by Jerry Fuchs



"My familiar tells me that there is  
great danger up ahead."

By Adam Homeyer

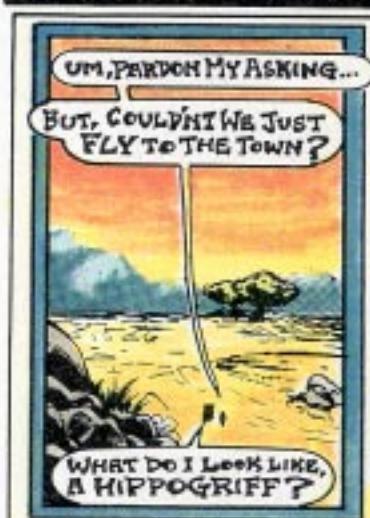
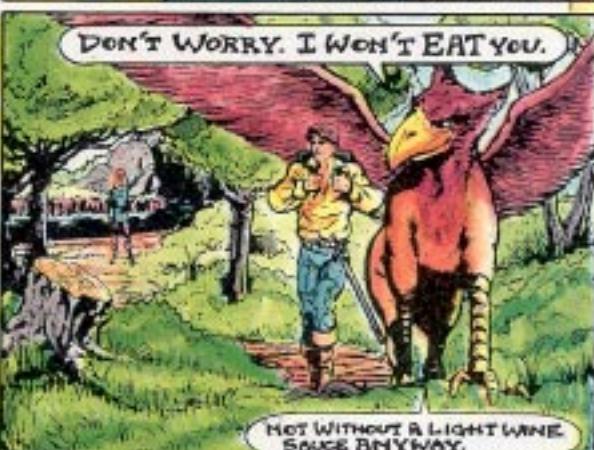
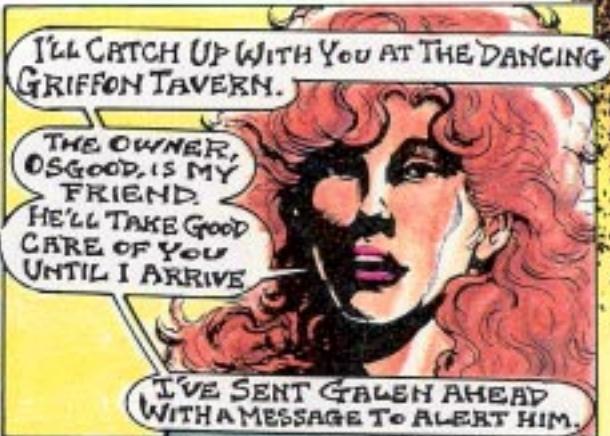
# Yamara THE PLUSH TOY.

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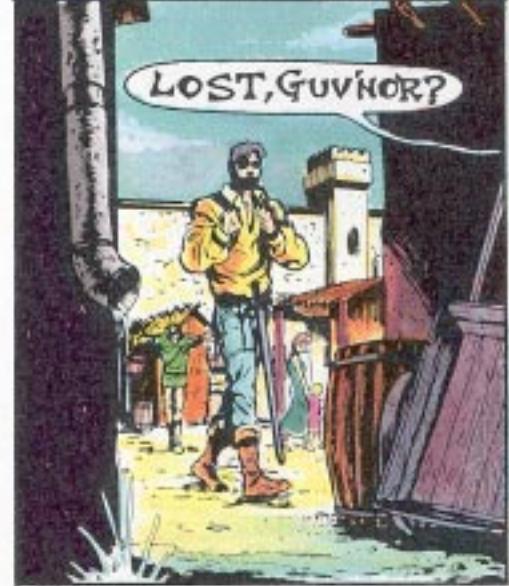
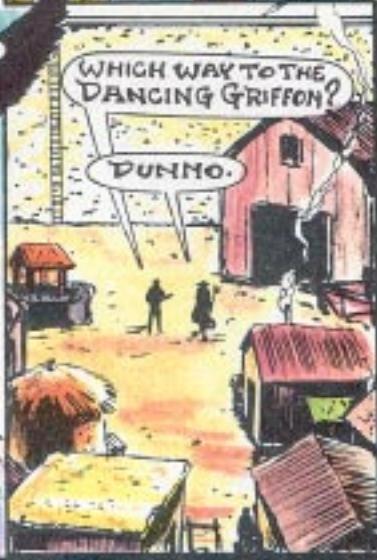
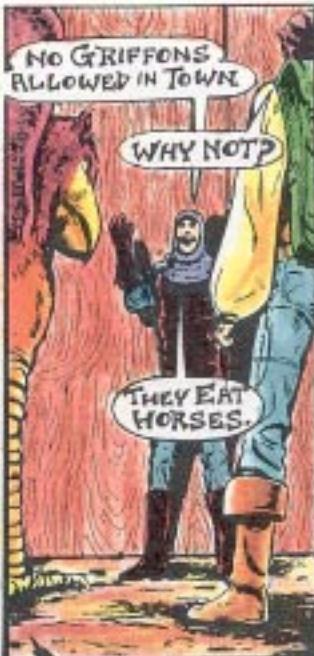
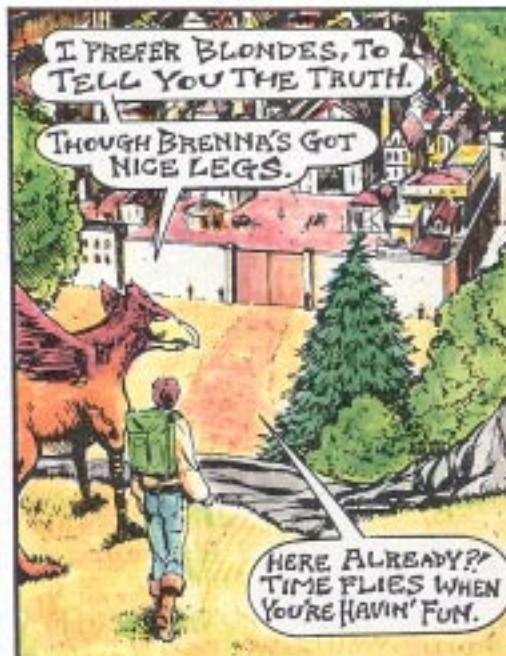
David McDowell

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# ROBINSON'S WAR

PART 4

COMING

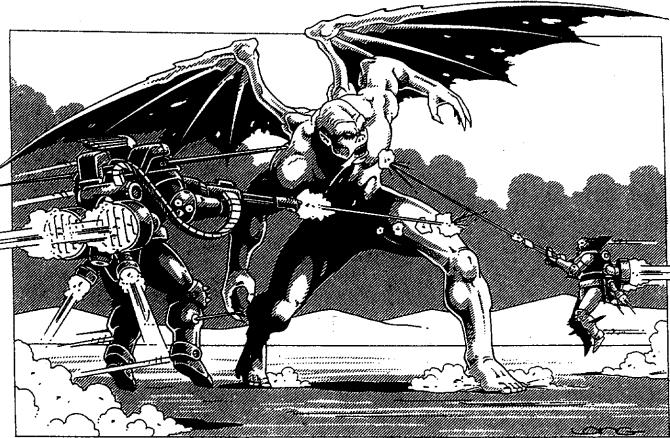


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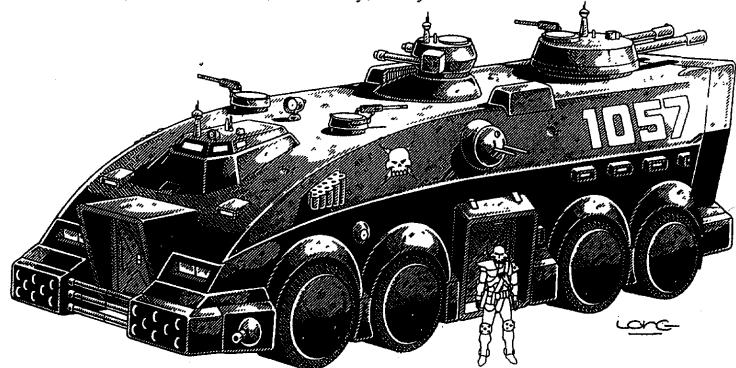


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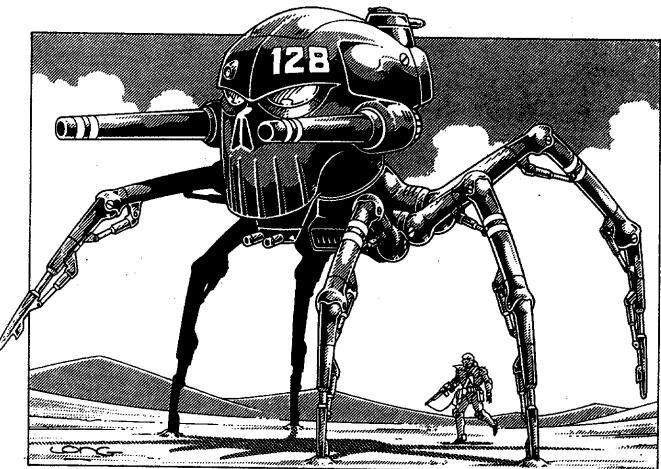


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## Convention Calendar

Continued from page 85

### GAME-FEST XI, August 15-19

This 11th-annual convention will be held in historic Old Town in San Diego, Calif. Over 50 gaming events include AD&D®, D&D®, AVALON HILL CLASSICS®, BATTLETECH®, CAR WARS®, TMN TURTLES®, WARHAMMER 40,000®, MONOPOLY®, and AXIS & ALLIES® games, with painting shows and more. Registration: \$20 before August 10 (includes coupon book for on-site purchases), or \$30 at the door. Write to: GAME-FEST XI, 3954 Harney St., San Diego CA 92110; or call: (619) 291-1666.

### KUBLA KHAN '90, August 17-18

Comics Utah presents this convention at the Redwood Multi-Purpose Center in Salt Lake City, Utah. This convention will feature comics, dealers, trading, RPGs, miniatures battles, contests, and prizes. Registration: \$7/day or \$10 for both days. Write to: Comics Utah, 2985 W. 3500 So., West Valley UT 84119; or call: (801) 966-8581.

### ELTANNCON '90, August 18-19

This convention will be held at the Henderson Convention Center in Henderson, Nevada. Events include AD&D®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, BATTLETECH®, CAR WARS®, and CHAMPIONS® games. Registration: \$10, which allows the attendee to participate in all events on a first-come, first-served basis. Write to: ELTANNCON '90, 860 E. Twain #128, Dept. 456, Las Vegas NV 89109; or call: (702) 733-8626.

### CAMALOT II, August 24-26

This will be held at the Sheraton Inn in Huntsville, Ala. Sponsored by the Huntsville Area Gamers and Role-players (H.A.G.A.R), this convention's events include a wide variety of RPGs and war games, a video room, an art show, and a costume dance. Registration: \$15 until July 10, or \$20 at the door. Write to: CAMALOT II, 4931 B Cotton Row Apts., Huntsville AL 35810; or call: Bryan Jones at: (205) 837-9036.

## Voidjammers!

Continued from page 26

the fighter is self-confident. Peregrin strongly dislikes uncertainty in people and expects his friends to hold their moral and intellectual ground even if they disagree with him. Flatterers do not stay in his company for long, nor do people who try to get him to solve their problems for them.

When Peregrin is used in a campaign, he should take the roll of a catalyst. He might tell PCs of an adventuring site he once bypassed, or an interesting area of Astral space he did not stop to thoroughly explore, etc. And he never denies knowledge to anyone who wants to know where githyanki or mind flayers live, if the questioners plan to attack these creatures. Peregrine should not help the PCs out with information or magic. He had to earn everything he has the hard way, and he will make others do the same.

# DRAGONSkins

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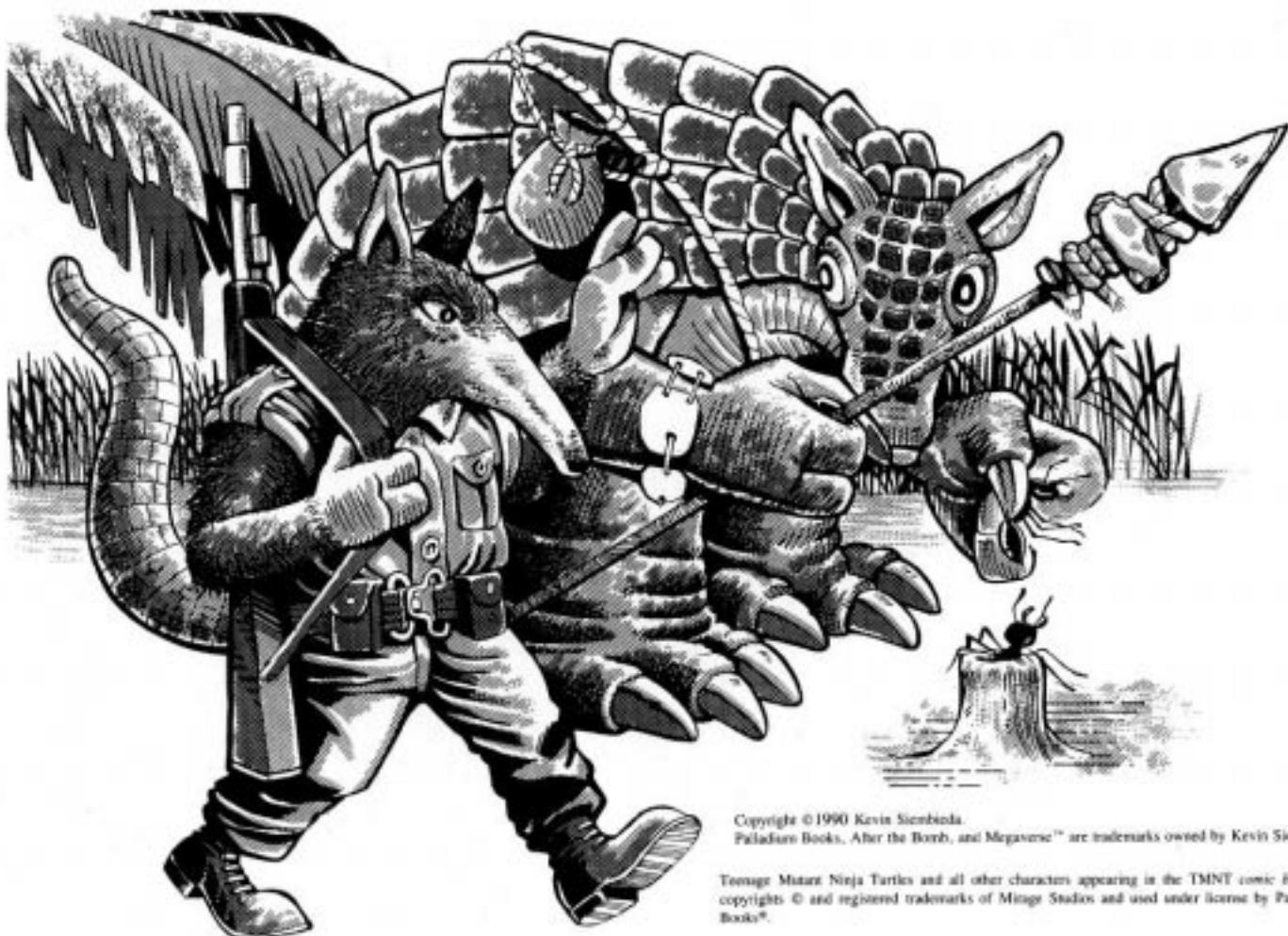
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# Through the LOOKING Glass

Down with dragons, up with tanks!

©1990 by Robert Bigelow

This month, we introduce more historical miniatures into this review column. While I understand that this column is in a fantasy gaming magazine, there is much to see beyond the thin line that separates the fantasy miniatures from the historical miniatures venue. In issue #157, GDW's BLUE MAX game was reviewed. This game, like the old DAWN PATROL® game from TSR, allows you to be the pilot of a World War I wood-and-cloth aircraft; you must out-think opponents using now-obsolete technology. As you play the game, you also relive the beginnings of one of the major weapons systems of the 20th century: the airplane. In aircraft's earliest days, pilots fired at one another with pistols from unarmed aircraft. By the end of World War I, synchronized machine guns and specialized aircraft (scout planes, fighters, bombers, and transports) were in wide use.

If World War I lies too far in the past for you, look around now at two of the most important periods of the 20th century. One of them was World War II, which affected every nation on the planet and started just over 50 years ago. From that war came such developments as the blitzkrieg, combined arms operations, carrier warfare, guided missiles, advanced projectile weapons, jet aircraft, and the widespread and integrated use of tanks—not to mention the invention of the atomic bomb. In the wake of that war, the political face of the world was forever changed.

The second of these two great periods is going on now. In the last five years, we have seen many dictatorships and repressive governments fall or be voted out of power. We are at a great historical crossroads, one at which there can be either grave consequences or a brighter future.

Why the history lecture? You'll find that when you play historical miniatures games, especially on a wide scale or with a campaign game, you begin to see just how fragile history can be. We would live in a much different world today had things gone differently during the battles of

D-Day, Pearl Harbor, the Bulge, or Midway. By studying historical miniatures games, you can study the great events of the world.

I am not suggesting that anyone stop playing fantasy role-playing games. I'm simply offering an alternative set of games that promise more immediate gains. Many of the people who play GDW's TWILIGHT 2000™ system or modern microarmor can instantly recognize most military equipment shown on TV and know who uses it. Are those soldiers from the Soviet army or are they actually elite Soviet troops such as airborne? Is the battle being shown a minor disturbance or are they calling on crack troops to handle it? By knowing the little things learned in gaming, you watch the news—your history in the making—much more closely.

Try a little history in your gaming. Yes, sometimes historical miniatures games move more slowly than role-playing games, and the multitude of troops is a bit boggling as the armies march across the battlefield, but you can now control many more "characters" than just one. You can lead, you can learn, and you can add to your gaming knowledge.

Check with your hobby shop and in convention listings to see if there will be a historical miniatures gaming convention near you. Conventions like these have events ranging from clashes between ancient armies to cavalry charges in the American Civil War. The Historical Miniatures Gaming Societies (HMGSS) on the east coast and in the Midwest invite you to attend and see how the other half plays.

Now that I've enticed some of the role-players, I'll throw out a challenge to the historical gamers reading my column. I challenge you each to introduce two new people to historical miniatures. Your gaming will be all the richer for having new opponents and theirs will be richer for having new games. Be fair when you introduce them and teach them all that you know, for we want more long-term and effective players.

Photography by Mike Bethke and Ral Partha



Heavy armored lance (M-3 Miniatures)



Light recon hovercraft (M-3 Miniatures)

## M-3 Miniatures

4233 Mario  
Plymouth MI 48170

**1012 Light recon hovercraft** \*\*\*\*  
**1009 Heavy armored lance** \*\*\* 1/2

We've been getting new releases from this company in a steady stream. We've also been getting feedback on these vehicles from some readers, and most of the feedback has been good. Many people have expressed disagreement with the statistics for use with FASA's BATTLE-TECH® game on the packages. I should remind you that these are *suggested* stats. If you feel that your stats are better, use them and send a copy to M-3 Miniatures.

The heavy armored lance represents a group of four large 80-ton vehicles, each 1" long and 5/8" wide. Each tank rides on two sets of twin treads, which themselves ride on a series of road wheels that are partially protected from weapons' fire by shields. The upper deck of the tank's hull shows positions for two light rifles or

## Reviews

### Miniatures' product ratings

*	Poor
**	Below average
***	Average
****	Above average
*****	Excellent

machine guns facing forward and detailed exhaust/heat sinks on the rear. The turret measures 5/16" wide by 3/8" long and has one massive gun; according to the BATTLETECH stats, the gun is an AC 20. In addition to the guns, there are two six-tube missile launchers on the turret, they are given no stats. My personal feeling is that they should be LRM 6 types, with one reload in the tube; this would increase their striking power and would make the tank more valuable, but would also raise the weight to 90 tons. These tanks are nice additions to a miniatures armored force. The only drawback is that the treads are not as armored as I would like them to be. These tanks are definitely worth the \$4.75 per package of four.

The light recon hovercraft are made to be anything but armored. These 21-ton vehicles are designed to scoot in, locate targets, take fire, and hopefully withdraw to harass from the flanks. The models submitted for review fit in well with this philosophy. Each vehicle is 1 5/8" long by 7/8" wide; the air-cushion skirt takes up three-quarters of the width. The actual body and crew area is only 5/16" wide, 1/4" tall, and 1" long, and looks like a helicopter body. The cabin has two large escape hatches and armored front windows. The propulsion motor is mounted above the cabin and is almost as long as the cabin. Two intakes are mounted forward with a single large exhaust to the rear. The difference of length between the cabin and the total length is taken up by a tail-like boom which ends in two steering rudders, laid out in a horizontal I-shape. The SRM 4 racks are located on opposite sides of the hover skirt, which has ribbed edges.

This vehicle will serve a very useful purpose on the 'Mech battlefield. Being a hover vehicle, it can get to some places quicker than a 'Mech and can set itself to ground, providing a good spotter vehicle with a low profile. It is also a fair harassment vehicle. The vehicle is \$4.75 per pack of three.

## GHQ

2634 Bryant Avenue South  
Minneapolis MN 55408

<b>US-66 M15 Special w/40 mm</b>	***** ½
<b>UK-34 Staghound armored car</b>	*****
<b>W-54 ACRV I &amp; II artillery command vehicles</b>	*****
<b>W-50 SA-8 Gecko antiaircraft missiles</b>	*****

The U.S. Army learned several lessons from the Germans in World War II. One of the most important was the deadliness of attacking aircraft on columns with no antiaircraft protection. Several aircraft equipped with 20-mm cannons for wing guns could (and sometimes did) gut entire columns that were unlucky enough not to be equipped with AA. Aircraft could bomb or strafe almost at will. One of the ways that these attacks were driven off was by



M15 Special with 40-mm gun (GHQ)



Staghound armored car (GHQ)

using halftracks modified to act as gun platforms. The M-15 was one such vehicle, made up of an M-3 halftrack with cut-down sides and a full-rotation turret equipped with a 37-mm or 40-mm gun. This turret could fire at a plane even after the aircraft had flown over its target.

US-66 from GHQ is representative of one of these specially built units. The model is 1/285th scale and designed for use with any equipment around 5 mm (1/300th scale). The miniature is 7/8 inch long and 5/16" wide. The miniature shows the standard M-3 halftrack complete with a winch on the front, which was used to pull the vehicle out of the mud. The cab is covered by a wrinkled tarp. The back of the halftrack has a flat area with a raised ring on which the turret rotates and a tool box in the rear. The turret is slotted to accept a gun; you simply take a gun from the sprue that comes with the vehicle and insert it in the slot in the floor. Add one man from the sprue, glue both in, and the turret is done. Place the turret on the ring, and the vehicle is ready.

The vehicle comes with a wealth of detail. Hinges, jerry cans, door handles, and wheel details are excellent and not what you would expect on a vehicle this small. The package also contains extra guns and loaders. This set is highly recommended for people interested in World War II. The only problem I could find with this model is that the tool box/ammo box

prevents the turret from turning a full 360°. You can get four vehicles for \$5.50.

UK-34 Staghound has an interesting real-life history. The Staghound started out as a joint United Kingdom/United States project to develop a fast-moving, well-armed, and well-armored scout vehicle. The program was in its last stages before production when the U.S. suddenly abandoned it for no apparent reason. The British continued the project, and over 3,000 Staghounds were in use by the end of World War II. One variant even sported a tank turret.

The Staghound miniature is molded to conform to the original vehicle standards. The miniature is a high-profile, four-wheel vehicle that measures 3/4" long by 7/16" wide. The vehicle mounts an oval turret with a 37mm gun, and it has a wealth of detail. The front clearly shows three light sets and a tow cable. Escape hatches, battery boxes, and extra fuel tanks are all present, as are the engine maintenance covers on the rear and the tow hook on the lower rear. The turret plainly shows the riveting on the forward metal plate to which the gun is attached. Two hatches are on top of the turret.

This vehicle would be simple to convert to science-fiction miniatures games. A package of five Staghounds is available for \$5.50 and is highly recommended.

W-54 is a modern Soviet ACRV—an Artillery Command and Reconnaissance Vehicle. These tracked units act as the forward



Soviet ACRV (GHQ)



Soviet SA-8 Gecko (GHQ)

coordinating posts or the actual command post for groups ranging from a six-gun battery to a 24-gun battalion. In these vehicles, fire missions are written and coordinates are checked.

The miniature is just over 1" long and 7/16" wide, shaped like a large box on tracks. Only the forward track wheels are protected. The front of the vehicle has two armored hatches for the driver and radio-man to view the action, and two more hatches on top for them to escape. Entrances and exits abound on this vehicle, with well done hinges, cables, and connectors. The package contains two different versions, type 1 for work behind friendly lines and type 2 for the field.

This vehicle is an ideal dual-purpose or crossover item for many science-fiction games, like FASA's BATTLETECH game or GW's WARHAMMER™ 40,000 epic 5-mm system. The vehicle is generic in shape and is so rich in detail that it could be a headquarters or commlink vehicle to be proud of. I also recommend this model for anyone from a diorama maker to a dual-period player. These are fairly inexpensive at \$5.50 per pack of five.

W-50 is a model of Soviet-built antiaircraft missile system, the SA-8b, which has a range of 30 km. The system is in use in Syria, India, Iraq, the Warsaw Pact countries, and, of course, the Soviet Union. The vehicle is amphibious and can fire on the move. It is also one of the few one-vehicle

systems the Soviet bloc has, as all the radar, rangefinders, missiles, and reloads are contained on one vehicle.

This GHQ miniature comes in four different pieces with easily followed instructions. The hull looks surprisingly like a large boat with wheels, measuring 1 1/4" long and 7/16" wide. Detail on the vehicle is good, showing individual tire treads, gas filler spout, lights, and blast protectors well defined. The Soviet's practice of using horizontal ribs to strengthen their large amphibious vehicles is obvious with the crisp lines present on this model.

The actual missile assembly uses the other three pieces. The triple multifrequency radar is prominent in front. Then comes the large tower to which the missiles attach, as well as the search radar at the top. Each piece shows special attention to detail, like the bolts on the radar protector, ribs on the back of the search radar, or the heat dispersal vents on the missile launchers.

It would be easy to convert this unit into science-fiction game campaigns. Simply use the missiles against VTOL or fighter aircraft or use the vehicle as an LRM carrier. These vehicles come three to the pack for \$5.50.

## C in C

8090 University Avenue NE  
Fridley MN 55432

### MS-24 D5A Albatross

\*\*\*\*\* 1/2

### MS-12 SE5A

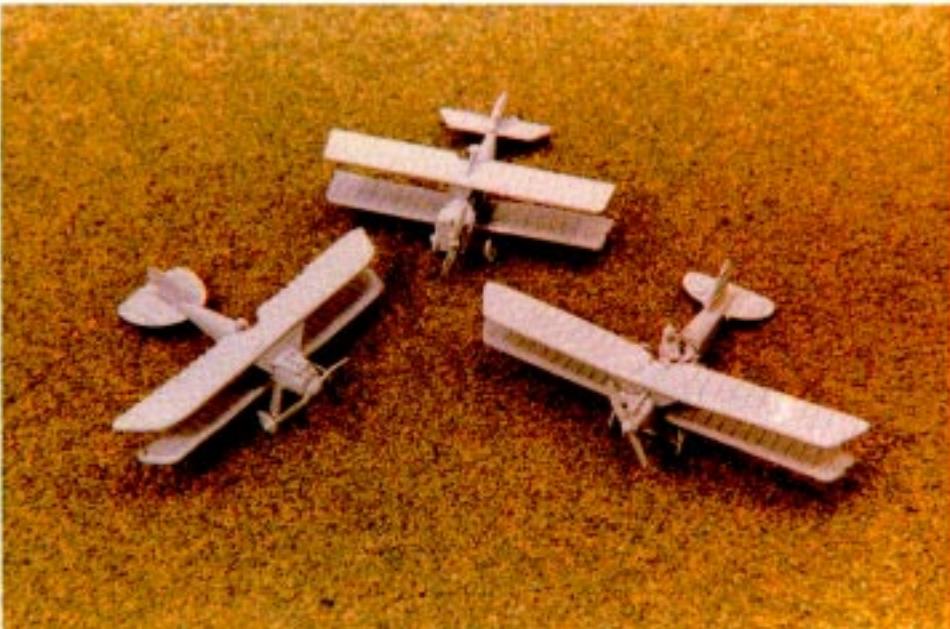
\*\*\*\*\* 1/2

### MS-22 Halberstadt

\*\*\*\*\* 1/2

When the BLUE MAX board game was reviewed in issue #157, information was given on how to change it to a miniatures game. Now you have some planes to use in your campaigns.

## World War I aircraft (C in C)



The D5A Albatross was a latecomer to World War I, making its debut in 1917 after some earlier models. The D5A had a strengthened body, a bigger engine than previous versions, and dual machine guns. Despite its hardiness, it could not climb as high or stay up as long as most of the Allied planes of the period (endurance: 2 hours; ceiling: 18,700').

The SE5A was another 1917 entry into the air-elimination tournaments. This British aircraft appears shorter, squared off, and more boxlike in comparison with many German planes. But what it lacked in size, it made up for by being faster, having the ability to reach higher altitudes, and having a longer flight time. These were important points as many British bases were farther from the combat zone than were their German counterparts, and the speed and extra height allowed them to dive down onto their opponents out of the sun (endurance: 2 1/2 hours; ceiling: 19,000').

The Halberstadt model is actually the Halberstadt CV. This photo-recon aircraft was introduced in 1918 and flew only for a limited time before the war ended. Up to 25% larger than either of the two preceding aircraft, this one had a crew of two: a pilot and a gunner/observer who manned a machine gun that fired to the rear and sides. This weapon and the forward machinegun gave these planes nearly a 360° firing arc. Though these aircraft were slow, they could remain in the air longer (3 1/2 hours) and fly almost as high (16,405') as British or Allied aircraft.

All three of these aircraft come as quality kits from C in C, having from five to six pieces each. Each plane matches its photographs and line drawings, including such details as the stack exhaust on the Halberstadt and the upper wing machine gun on

the SE5A. Wing spars are clearly visible on the fuselages. The V-type landing gear is well done but is molded as a single block rather than with individual struts and wheels that would crumple the first time you set the aircraft down. The lower wings fit into slots on the bottom of the fuselage; with the exception of the SE5A, horizontal flaps slip into the fuselage as well. The SE5A requires full tail assembly.

The bad points of these aircraft models are few and are more points of personal preference. The planes require steady hands, a good thick superglue, and proper tools to assemble. Assembly is easy to do, but there are no instructions. In addition, the peg-to-hole assembly on three of my models was slightly off or the holes were too small, requiring the pegs be trimmed and held in place while the glue dried. There are no small strings of flash that can be clipped with ease, but some care should be taken not to break delicate parts. Finally, the spar and frame detail appears only on the tops of the surfaces, not on the bottoms. This is a shame, as it would be nice to see detail on all sides of these models.

Individual support spars do not appear on these models, leaving room for perfectionists to personalize. Because these aircraft are 1/285th scale, they are slightly bigger than the hexes on gaming sheets, but they fit in well anyway. They are a good buy at \$4.75 per two aircraft, and they make good playing or display pieces.

are very well done, with well-defined feathers having no flash. The slot for the wings on the back of the pegasus needs to be cleaned out and enlarged just a bit for the wings to fit; the fit then is good, with easily filled gaps. A mold line runs from the tail to the base, which must be clipped, and light flash is present on the legs and neck. Heavier flash was present on the rear leg, so some clean-up is involved with this miniature.

The pegasus is posed as if launching himself into the air. He is about 2" long from tip of nose to the rump and about 1½" from hoof to top of neck. His mane ripples on his neck with good detail on the hair. The tail hangs down and is also well done—but why is the mane rippling and the tail straight? The wings stretch 3½" tip to tip. The pegasus is average in size and girth for 25-mm scale and is slightly smaller than one of my heavy horses for 25-mm medieval knights.

The rider is an average 25-mm knight with a serious expression. He carries an overly thick spear in his right hand, and his left hand is lowered as if holding reins. The rider wears a full set of plate armor with only his face exposed.

As a playing piece this is good, but it is not quite a collector's piece. From stories I have read, the wingspan of a mature pegasus should be about twice as big and the body should be fuller. Still, this is a fairly good miniature for \$3.50.

### Ral Partha Enterprises

5938 Carthage Court  
Cincinnati OH 45212

#### RP 11-409 Four orcs

\*\*\*\*\*½

Orcs continue to be a favorite target for experience-hungry parties, and they are a longtime favorite of the miniatures companies. Now Ral Partha is working with TSR to produce the official line of figures for the AD&D® game, and these orcs are a part of that line. The set submitted for review contains four orcs in different poses and with different weapons. The figures are in 25-mm scale and have round bases.

Figure #1 is a very brave, charging orc. The figure holds an ornate long sword aloft in his right hand; a round metal shield hangs on his left arm, complete with rivets on the rim. He holds the shield close to the ground to protect his left side. Scale armor covers only his front. Under the lower part of the armor and extending around the figure is an unidentifiable skin that covers his back from the waist down. His odd helm has jagged spines on the top, and he wears sandals. Muscle detail is present but not as deep as in most Ral Partha figures. Several areas of light flash are present on the figure, and one large mold mark lies in the right armpit. The enraged facial expression is good, with the mouth open in a scream. Fangs show up well with no flash.

Figure #2 is bent at the knees and rocked back to the right side as if avoiding a thrust while aiming a blow. His right arm is bare from the elbow down except for a thick bracelet. In his right hand he grips a jagged scimitar, while on his left arm he has an arched-door-type metal shield with no rivets. His head is covered by a metal helmet with a plume that leaves only his scowling face and long braided ponytail uncovered. His shoulders are covered in overlapping plates that are riveted together. This orc is otherwise bare except for a loincloth and a wide, studded belt with a skull buckle. This figure shows no flash except by the feet, and the only visible mold line runs across the shield and the base.

Figure #3 reminds me of a cross between a member of the Mongol horde and a beach boy. The figure wears sandals, and his muscular legs are bare to just above the knees. At this point he wears a pair of cut-offs with no visible pockets or seams. The pants are held by a very narrow belt with a long dagger hanging from it. From the waist up, the Mongol appearance begins. He wears a studded leather vest with his chest and stomach exposed. On his shoulders rides a furry stole which goes from arm to arm. On his head is a leather hood which comes to a point on top and is unsecured in the front. The orc's face is bunched in a sneer. In his right hand he holds a sword, and on his left arm is a metal-covered round wooden shield with visible hand and wrist straps. There is some flash by the left foot and on the front of the left arm. There are no mold lines on this figure.

Figure #4 appears to be kneeling, as if being photographed after making a big game kill. Both knees are bent, with one forward with the foot out and the other bent with his weight on the knee. Both feet are clad in moccasins or light boots with thin soles. This orc wears a shin guard on his left leg only. He is also wearing a tattered suit of chain mail covered by a smock which stretches from his shoulders to mid thigh. The smock is held by a wide belt with a short sword hanging from it. His armor is completed by a set of overlapping disks in front and a plate on his right shoulder with a spike protruding from it. On his left arm is a shield which has no detail on the front but shows signs of wooden slats on the back, as well as wrist and arm straps. There are mold lines on the shield. In his right hand he holds a long-handled, lopsided, two-bladed axe emblazoned with front and back skulls on the center. The rivets holding the axe head onto the handle are clearly visible. He wears a helmet with a ridge in front and three large horns, two on either side and one in the center. This orc seems to have a satisfied look about him, if that's possible.

I recommend these figures as additions to your orc squads. They would make good additions to the orc "sleeve" of 12 figures now available from Ral Partha or



Pegasus with rider (Grenadier)

### Grenadier Models, Inc.

P.O. Box 305  
Springfield PA 19064

### Grenadier Models UK Ltd.

19 Babage Road  
Deeside, Clwyd, Wales  
United Kingdom CH5 2QB

#### GR716 Pegasus with rider

The Pegasus is the horse of an adventurer's dream. The miniature provided for review here consists of four parts: the horse, its wings, and a rider. The wings

to other single figures. My only reservation is that these figures show a slightly lower standard of quality than Ral Partha normally has, particularly in their shield detail. I hope this is a temporary problem. The price is \$4.95 per package.

**RP 11-407 Fire giant** \* \* \* \*  $\frac{1}{2}$

In issue #155, we reviewed the fire giant from Grenadier. This month we review the fire giant from Ral Partha.

The fire giant submitted for review is a 58-mm figure with its left knee bent, preparing to take a swing at some unwitting target. His head is covered by a helmet of overlapping scales and comes complete with ear and neck guards. A bushy beard covers his lower face, and he appears to be shouting. His large, hooked nose is deformed, as if it had been broken.

The giant's upper body is protected by a breastplate, under which is more of the scale armor that makes up his helmet. The scale mail is held in place by a wide belt and buckle, with a large dagger the size of a short sword hanging from the belt. His legs are bare from midthigh to his shins, where they are wrapped by his sandal thongs. His left shoulder is covered by overlapping plates down to his arm, with a strapped-on wrist guard. His right shoulder is protected by scale mail with a metal bracer on his right wrist. Both hands clutch a sword that is 38 mm from pommel to tip and has a "blood groove."

This figure is excellent, with slightly exaggerated muscle structure and very little flash. The only required assembly involves the three spikes that must be inserted into the right shoulder guard. The figure doesn't seem tall enough to match the description of the fire giant in TSR's AD&D 2nd Edition *Monstrous Compendium*, but this can be easily overlooked. Its price is \$4.95.

Fire giant (Ral Partha)



\* \* \* \*  $\frac{1}{2}$



Four orcs (Ral Partha)

**RP 20-630 TOG Imperial guard in ceremonial dress** \* \* \* \*  $\frac{1}{2}$

**RP 20-631 TOG Senator** \* \* \* \*  $\frac{1}{2}$

The interstellar TOG empire, as portrayed in FASA's *RENEGADE LEGION*® games, is beset by rebellion. These two figures are representative of the tyrannical overlords against whom the rebels are fighting.

The TOG Imperial Guard wears a ceremonial dress uniform that consists of a Roman-style tunic (of which only the front is shown), with bare legs from just below the bottom of the tunic to the top of his flexible magnet-type boots. The boots show half of the imperial eagle on the front and thin wiry straps around the legs down to the soles of his feet. Over this he wears a long billowing robe that drapes down from his shoulder guards to the tops of his boots. The robe has more pleats

than most window drapes. Covering this robe in the back and draping across his front is a formal cape that goes down to the waist. This cape is held by two clasps at the shoulders. The guard holds a large blaster rifle in the ready position. His helmet consists of a bullet-shaped body with eye slots and two ridges up the back; this is surrounded by an outer shell that forms forward-pointing wings above the eyes. Also included in this outer mask is a breather unit.

The senator figure is slightly smaller. His right hand reaches out as if imploring or making a point, and his left hand grasps his cloak. On his left arm is a wristwatch. He wears glasses and has short hair that seems to have been cut with a bowl. His face is thin and angular.

The senator's clothing is simple. He has a traditional thin Roman tunic, secured at

TOG Imperil guard and senator (Ral Partha)





Drakonne (Ral Partha)

the waist by a belt with pouches. His shirt sleeves show some embroidery, and his arms and legs are covered by a thin spandex-type material with a zipper. A long cape is draped from his shoulders.

These figures can be used in any number of science-fiction role-playing games. It's unfortunate that these figures have so many modern luxuries, as they would make very nice crossover historical pieces. The price is \$1.50 per figure.

**RP 02-413 Drakonne**

\*\*\*\*\*

Ral Partha's drakonne is an AD&D game dragonne that has assumed another name. TSR's AD&D 2nd Edition *Monstrous Compendium* describes a dragonne as being a mixture of the most dangerous qualities of a lion and a brass dragon. It has large brass scales, brass-colored eyes, and wiry hair that forms a thick mane. It looks like a giant lion with small wings.

The drakonne comes in two pieces, the body and the wings, the latter measuring 2 1/4 from tip to tip (the wings are not fully stretched out). The body section measures a little over 4 1/2" from nose to tail. The thick tail, covered with scales, is over 2" long. A ridge of spikes extends from the back of the head to the tail along the spine. The body looks very feline except that the chest is not quite deep enough and the entire trunk is covered by

scales, except for the long bony center section that goes from under the head to the hindquarters along the stomach. The head does look misplaced and too big for the neck, but it is in scale according to the *Monstrous Compendium*. Even the facial features and wide open mouth match that book's illustration.

The two pieces join together well, but you will need filler for the fit to be perfect (on our model, at least). Flash appears by the hindquarters and along the throat. A small mold defect must be trimmed on the front right leg, which is apparently where the metal is fed in.

I highly recommend this miniature even though you have to do a little bit of work to prepare it for painting. It's a good value at \$4.50.

Everyone remember that the 1990 GEN CON® game fair will be on August 9-12, at the MECCA arena in Milwaukee, Wis. Come over and see how the miniatures area has grown. If you want to see me or discuss any reviews, I will be at the Friends Hobby Shop booth and will try to spare the time to talk with you. Till next month. . .

□

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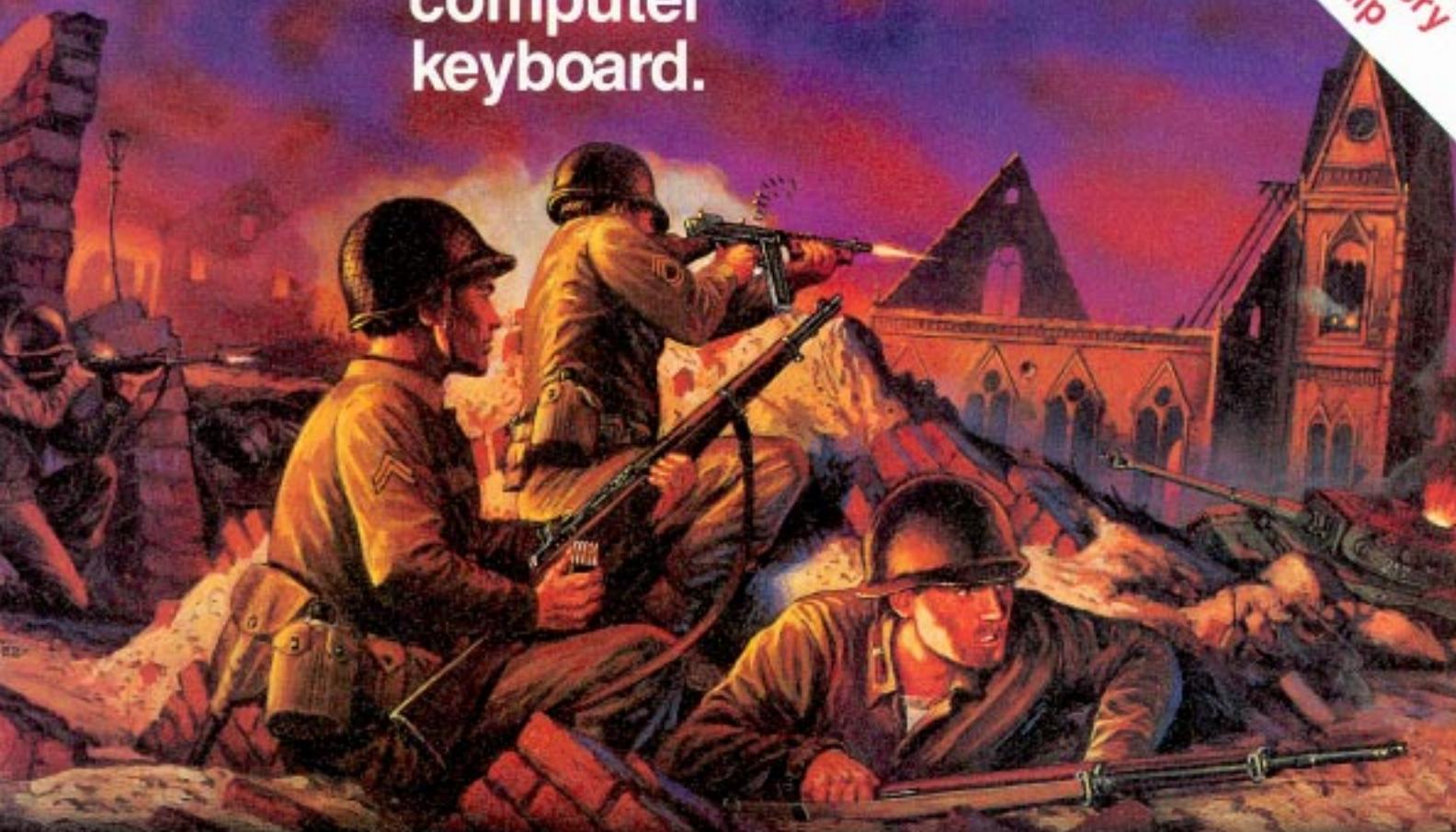
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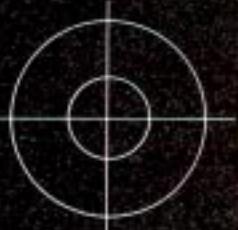
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1. One capable of moving unhindered through different realities. 2. Hero.



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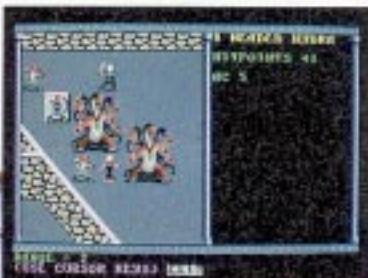
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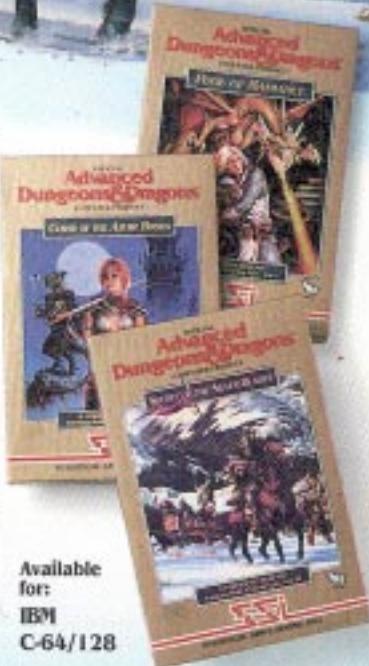
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